DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 261 397 CS 209 289

AUTHOR Shugert, Diane P., Ed.; And Others
TITLE Rationales for Commonly "Challenged" Taught Books.
INSTITUTION Connecticut Council of Teachers of English.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 145p.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
JOURNAL CIT Connecticut English Journal; v15 n1 Fall 1983

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescent Literature; *Censorship; *English Instruction; Freedom of Speech; Guidelines; *Literature Appreciation; *Novels; *Reading Material Selection; School Role; Secondary Education; *Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

Intended for teachers, this focused journal issue contains separate rationales for teaching books that have been challenged as appropriate instructional materials. Following a discussion of the purpose for rationales and suggestions for using them, the journal presents rationales for teaching the following books: "To Kill a Mockingbird," "The Diary of a Young Girl," "The Grapes of Wrath," "Catcher in the Rye," "The Good Earth," "Slaughterhouse-Five," "Huckleberry Finn," "Nineteen Eighty-four," "Lord of the Flies," "The Scarlet Letter," "A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," "Ethan Frome," "Brave New World," "A Separate Peace," "Of Mice and Men," "Animal Farm," "A Farewell to Arms," "The Learning Tree," "Ordinary People," "Flowers for Algernon," "The Chocolate War," "Go Ask Alice," "The Pigman," "The Outsiders," and "A Day No Pigs Would Die." In addition, the journal contains articles about using best sellers in the classroom, defending adolescent literature, selecting textbooks for classroom instruction, teaching challenged books in a psychiatric school setting, and challenged books in England. Appendixes contain a list of resource materials on censorship, the names and addresses of organizations that oppose censorship, and copies of the New England Association of Teachers of English rationales for teaching several additional books, the National Council of Teachers of English statement of censorship and professional guidelines, a Connecticut policy on academic freedom and public education, and a completion form for a rationale. (EL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED261397

CONNECTICUT ENGLISH JOURNAL

The Journal of the Connecticut Council of Teachers of English

Editor: Diane P. Shugert

Associate and Paperback Review Editor: Nancy Carriuolo

Advertising Manager: Sylvia Garstka

Volume 15 · Fall 1983 · Number 1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

CCTE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

RATIONALES FOR COMMONLY CHALLENGED TAUGHT BOOKS

The Connecticut English Journal is published in the fall and spring by the Connecticut Council of Teachers of English. Subscription is included in the annual membership dues ($15.00) which should be sent to CCTE, P.O. Box 2211, Enfield, CT 06082. For single copies of this issue, write to the CCTE post office address and enclose a check for $5.75 ($5.25 + .50 postage and handling) made out to CCTE.

Materials for publication and all communications regarding the journal should be sent to the editor: Diane P. Shugert, Box 124, Middle Haddam, CT 06456. CEJ solicits manuscripts related to themes announced in the Call for Manuscripts elsewhere in this issue.

---Member NCTE Information Exchange Agreement---

CS209289

PREFACE

This issue of the Connecticut English Journal is dedicated to the countless teachers and librarians who have been courageous enough--and professional enough--to resist the censors. Some have done so by insisting on teaching a book though doing so jeopardized--and in some cases, lost--their jobs. Some have done so by merely ordering a book even when they thought it might be challenged. All have cared for books and for students' rights to read, to know, and to learn. All act as trustees for our country's future.

The book rationales which appear in this issue are meant to encourage even more teachers to accept that trust, to realize that academic freedom entails academic responsibility, to insist on teaching those works which represent the literature of our culture and which can engage students in a lifetime of reading. All of the rationale writers are themselves teachers. They have given their time and their thought to help their colleagues and their colleagues' students. We owe them gratitude.

Special thanks are due our advertisers for this issue as well. Alan Hartley of H.P. Kopplemann's in Hartford, who supports CCTE in many ways, saw to it that publishers learned of the issue. Many of the advertisements were taken expressly to support the publication of the rationales. And of course, several advertisers buy space in every issue, giving CCTE some income as a base for CEJ.

Thanks also to Sylvia Garstka for her meticulous work as advertising manager, to Nancy Carriuolo for a fine job as our new paperback review editor, to Anne Goldin for the slave work of labeling journals and handling mailing lists, to Doris Hagearty of the Secretarial Service of Newington, and to Dave Farnsworth of Curry Copy Center in Newington, our printer.

Diane Shugert

CONTENTS

Preface iv

About Rationales 1

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee
Winifred E. Sanders 5

The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank
Richard Zahner 13

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck
Paul Cervoni 18

Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger
Leta Marks 23

The Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck
Wendell H. Coogan 27

Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut
Lorraine Waido 33

Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain
Norma Walrath 37

Nineteen Eighty-four by George Orwell
Roy Ogren 41

Lord of the Flies by William Golding
Patrick L. Mc Kiernan 45

The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne
Joan Wallace 48

A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich by Alexander Solzhenitsyn
Cicely German and Louise Biscogno 50

Ethan Frome by Edith Wharton
James M. Stoughton 53

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley
Roger Dennis 56

A Separate Peace by John Knowles
Renana Kadden 59

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck
Esther McCune 64

Animal Farm by George Orwell
Sylvester P. Walsh 66

A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway
Jeff Bouvier 68

The Learning Tree by Gordon Parks
Art Pepin 71

Ordinary People by Judith Guest
Carol Luckenbach 73

Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes
Mark A. Olsen 76

The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier
Gary Giannelli 79

Go Ask Alice (Anonymous)
Lynn Banta 82

The Pigman by Paul Zindel
Joan Venditto 86

The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton
Barbara Leigh Laurain 89

A Day No Pigs Would Die by Robert Newton Peck
Susan M. Metzler-Kirkman 92

Using Best Sellers
Christine Sullivan 95

Defending Adolescent Literature: A Classic Confrontation
Richard H. Gray 99

Selecting Textbooks for Classroom Instruction
Sherry Loring Winslow 103

Teaching Challenged Books in a Psychiatric School Setting
Phyllis M. Knight 106

Challenged Books in England
Paul Cervoni 108

Paperback Reviews
Nancy Carriuolo 111

RESOURCES 124-136

References 124

Connecticut Organizations Active Against Censorship 125

National Organizations Active Against Censorship 126

1970 NCTE Rationales

Mr. & Mrs. Bo Jo Jones 127
Soul on Ice 127
Manchild in the Promised Land 128

NCTE Statement of Censorship and Professional Guidelines 129

Free To Learn: A Policy on Academic Freedom and Public Education 131

Paul Cervoni, CCTE's Response 132
Diane Shugert, A Response 133

Completion Form for Rationale 136

[T]he imaginative writer is unfree when he has to falsify his subjective feelings, which from his point of view are facts. He may distort and caricature reality in order to make his meaning clearer, but he cannot misrepresent the scenery of his own mind: he cannot say with any conviction that he likes what he dislikes, or believes what he disbelieves. If he is forced to do so, the only result is that his creative faculties dry up. Nor can he solve the problem by keeping away from controversial topics. There is no such thing as genuinely non-political literature, and least of all in an age like our own, when fears, hatreds, and loyalties of a directly political kind are near to the surface of everyone's consciousness. Even a single taboo can have an all-around crippling effect upon the mind, because there is always the danger that any thought which is freely followed up may lead to the forbidden thought.

George Orwell, "The Prevention of Literature," in In Front of Your Nose 1945-1950, Vol. IV of The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, eds., New York, 1968, p. 71.

WNBA

If our form of government is to continue, it is imperative that future citizens and leaders be enlightened and capable of thought. Books and other materials, encompassing a multitude of facts, opinions and ideas, are the tools through which the young become enlightened and are taught to think. To limit the horizons of young people today because a few or many dislike or disagree with the ideas presented in materials is to cripple the heart and the future of our Constitutional Republic.

Judith F. Krug
Director
Office for Intellectual Freedom
American Library Association

Were it not for commonly taught and commonly challenged books like *Of Mice and Men*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and *The Learning Tree*, many of today's high school students would have little opportunity to learn about — or discuss — the concepts and consequences of such realities as injustice, inequality, intolerance, inhumanity, and so on. Young people need to learn to recognize difficult things for what they are and to develop strategies for dealing with them. Books help to make those goals reachable.

Barbara Parker
Director, Freedom to Learn Project
People For The American Way

This ad presented by the Women's National Book Association, a supporter of intellectual freedom since 1917. Chapters in : Binghamton, Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Nashville, New York, San Francisco and Washington / Baltimore.

About Rationales

How can we justify studying a book? Who would think that justification is even necessary? Need we justify watching a sunset, singing a lullaby, or kissing our spouses? Must we justify voting or protecting our neighbor's right to vote? Books are the stuff of English language arts classes. Do we have to defend the fact that students in English classes learn English?

Sadly, we do. In 1982 Lee Burress (now Chair of NCTE's Committee Against Censorship) surveyed censorship in American school libraries. The survey revealed some disquieting information. More than half of the respondents reported challenges to materials in school libraries. (By region: Northeast 56%; Midwest 54%; Plains 53%; Texas 53%; Far West 51%; Old South 44%) The challenges were to approximately 500 titles (books, periodicals, and films), and in about half the instances some form of restriction was placed on the challenged materials. The survey revealed another ominous development: More than 17% of the respondents indicated that an organized community group was attacking school materials. Less than 1% of respondents to earlier surveys (1966-1977) had reported such groups.

So in half our schools books are under attack, in one-fourth the schools students' access to books has been restricted; and in nearly one-fifth of our communities school boards, teachers, and librarians are subject to constant challenges from persistent would-be censors. The censors say that schools are teaching a Godless, immoral religion called Secular Humanism, that teachers are trying to destroy the family and American ideals, and that books cause students to become thieves, atheists and pregnant. The chilling effects of the censors' activities are immeasurable, and potential damage to the education of future citizens and to the nation's vitality is incalculable.

But, although constant criticism tends to make them feel dispirited and helpless, English language arts teachers are actually in a strong position--and so are the books they teach. Common sense alone assures most citizens that an American Literature class without American Literature would be a strange bird indeed, and most people know that reading about an act is not the same as doing it, that teaching about something is not the same as advocating it. The Connecticut State Board of Education has stated those principles in its policy on academic freedom, Free To Learn (reprinted in the "Resources" section). Furthermore, English language arts teachers are educated, trained, certified, and hired specifically because they know about books and can teach students to read books. The English language arts teacher is a professional and uses professional judgment in selecting books for students to study.

What is professional judgment, though? It is open, not secret. It accords with the goals of the school system. It takes into account the reading abilities and the psychological and social development of the students. It refers to the views of other teachers, critics, and professionals. Above all, it is rational and explainable.

WHAT ARE RATIONALES?

Rationales, then, are simply teachers' (or schools' or English departments') explanations of their professional judgment. They explain

1. How a chosen book fits the objectives of the school and the curriculum.

2. How a book qualifies as "English"--its literary value, its professional acceptability. Here a rationale may draw upon critical reviews from trade sources; English teaching recommendations from, perhaps, articles in EJ, the ALAN Newsletter, or CEJ's "Paperback Reviews"; and professional positions and policies like NCTE's "Essentials of English," "Statement on Censorship and Guidelines," Students' Right To Read, or Students' Right To Know.

3. How a book meets the needs of the particular students who study it. Such explanations will include statements like, "Students at this age have access to drugs. They need to know the dangers so that they can resist peer pressures to experiment with drugs."

4. How the teacher teachers the book. "Although Holden Caulfield uses bad language, students see that his language is a pathetic attempt to appear a big shot."

5. How the book relates to the democratic ideal of the educated citizen, prepared to make her own decisions. One democratic ideal, embodied in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, requires respect for and knowledge of--though not agreement with--other people's ideas and opinions.

The rationales written for this issue of CEJ present all those justifications. The teachers who prepared these explanations of their professional judgment have done only what NCTE recommends all English language arts teachers do--provide a written rationale for every book that students will study in class.

HOW TO USE CEJ RATIONALES

A rationale written by another teacher in another state or even in the school next door can never substitute for a rationale written by the teacher who is actually teaching a book--you, yourself, must explain why and how you use this book in your class. But CEJ's rationales might serve as models for rationales that you write. Winifred Sanders' reasons for teaching To Kill A Mockingbird may be much like your reasons for teaching it. Or Richard Zahner's reasons for teaching Anne Frank's Diary may parallel yours for teaching Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath. Considering CEJ rationales as models, then, note that most are written in plain language, are professional in tone, and cite reviews.

In addition, the CEJ rationales are themselves reviews. Each one proves that at least one English language arts teacher (and at least one editor of a professional journal) believes the book to be worthy of classroom study. You could well use a CEJ rationale as cited reference. Or you could reproduce a CEJ rationale as the starting point for your own, using the questions from the "Teacher's Completion Form" (reprinted in the "Resources" section) as a guide.

WHAT THE CEJ RATIONALES SHOW

Books were selected for review in this CEJ by comparing Lee burress' survey lists of "Most Frequently Challenged Books ...1965-1982" and "Most Frequently Challenged Books...1982" with several surveys of books most frequently taught in United States schools. Only one of the books for which CEJ prints a rationale has not appeared on a challenged list. (And I defy the reader to determine which book.) Almost all have been challenged in recent years, as well. So the first thing the rationales reveal is how old most of the books are, how much a part of the acknowledged American literary heritage they are. Orwell's Big Brother (1984) and Huxley's ironic use of "Brave New World" have become unremarked and unremarkable in our current thought. Steinbeck's humane portraits of the poor displaced by the dust bowl and the depression (Grapes of Wrath and Of Mice and Men) are at the core of our understanding of that period. The copyright of A Farewell to Arms is 1929, and the realities and mores it depicts are those of the First World War.

That is, teachers are teaching and censors are censoring not ephemeral, worthless books but rather books read all over the world for forty or fifty years, books whose authors have won Nobel and Pulitzer prizes. (As this issue of CEJ goes to press, William Golding, author of Lord of the Flies, has been awarded the Nobel prize for 1983.)

Secondly, the CEJ rationales utterly give the lie to the charge that teachers are engaged in some sinister, crackpot conspiracy to foist immorality on the nation or that a teacher selects books in order to inculcate the teacher's religion or world view upon students. The English language arts teachers who wrote these rationales teach a book because the book has literary value, because students can understand it, because students will be led from that book to others, because the book's point of view bears upon democratic and American values, and because the teachers love books. Now some may say that the teacher's love of the books constitutes a sort of prejudice--an indoctrination of the teacher's values, but I say we'll be in a pretty putrid pickle if we condemn teachers for loving what they teach.

Diane P. Shugert
CEJ Editor
Connecticut Coalition for Academic Freedom
1979-1982 Chair, NCTE Committee Against Censorship

When I employ "bad language," as you call it, and references to sex, it is not because I think these are needed to sell books or to hold the reader's interest, but because sex and body functions and the names for them, both polite and impolite, are parts of life, and I am interested in portraying life as it really is. If I fudge on details by creating an angry football player who says, "Oh, sugar!", who will trust me later, when I try to convey important things that athletes think and feel?

Robin Brancato. Quotations from young adult authors in this issue of CEJ are from Norma Klein, "Some Thoughts on Censorship: An Author Symposium," Top of the News (Winter 1983), pp. 137-153.

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

Winifred E. Sanders

The editor to whom Harper Lee submitted the manuscript of a short story back in the 1950's urged her to expand the story into a novel, apparently perceiving the timeliness of the material, for Jackie Robinson had recently become the first Negro to play big league baseball and in Montgomery, Alabama, the Rev. Martin Luther King was using the fighting technique of passive resistance to attack discrimination.

With such events as a catalyst, Harper Lee reached back twenty years to remember what it was like to grow up the daughter of a liberal lawyer in a small, bigoted Alabama town. Her father became the model for Atticus, who is at the heart of this novel about the various aspects of truth and justice. "It is a love story, pure and simple," Harper Lee has said.

To Kill a Mockingbird became a best seller, was made into a movie, won for its author a Pulitzer Prize, and has been translated into ten languages. It is still one of the most read books in the schools, although frequently censored. What is its value today, more than twenty years after its publication in 1960? Why has it been attacked?

The book is of value because the intense, fully-detailed scenes take the reader into the mind and heart of Scout Finch, the narrator, as she becomes aware of herself in relationship to her father and the assorted people in her world of the 1930's--with their attitudes, traditions, and prejudices. History and sociology books explain the conditions that led to the Civil Rights Movement. This novel lets the reader internalize them.

Without guidance, students may consider the early episodes a mere random collection of childhood experiences. A close reading will reveal that they steadily build up the portrait of Atticus, a wise and loving father, a man who is the epitome of tolerance and courtesy, and a liberal lawyer who steadfastly believes in equal justice for all. The episodes also present the town of Maycomb, with its camellias, cracklin' bread, where illiterate Negroes chop cotton and the doctor charges a bushel of potatoes for delivering a baby.

> If students keep a step-by-step record on Atticus throughout the novel, they will not only understand him in his time and place but begin to understand the standards and forces involved whenever men of good will strive against prejudice and injustice.

Winifred E. Sanders has taught English in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. She is a former President of CCTE and NEATE; and Secretary of CSSEDC.

The main objections to the book seem to come from those who question the wisdom of the Civil Rights Movement and disapprove of having Negroes presented in a favorable light--the quiet power of Calpurnia, the cook, who oversees the children; the helpfulness and courtesy of Tom, the accused but innocent Negro; the dignity of Rev. Mr. Sykes. Some Negroes have objected to the use of the term "nigger" although this is what the Negroes in the book call themselves and Atticus does not let the children use the term. Objections come, too, from those who do not like profane words in any book read in the schools or any reference to religion that is not a warm commendation. Objections come from parents who do not want their children to have any knowledge of lust and rape, even when presented without sensation.

Scout Finch, the narrator, is age six when the story opens, a Tarzan in a treehouse, an actress in imaginative little plays of mystery and make believe concocted with Jem, her brother who is ten, and Dill, the diminutive summer visitor next door, who is going on seven. Their most intriguing drama is a wild embroidery on what they have heard about Boo Radley, a prisoner in a near-by house, a monster that eats raw squirrels.

The episodes in the novel that take the children from their private world into that of men achieve their reality because they are told largely through conversation, each character using his own level of language and expressing his own perception of reality. Scout, Jem, and Dill are young enough at the beginning of the tale to say exactly what they think. Scout is a freethinker and most outspoken. Aunt Alexandra has not yet come to live with them and decree what Finches may and may <u>not</u> think, say, and do. The adult world has not yet filled them with its ideas.

The town, as the children comprehend it, is full of scolds, gossips, silly school teachers, people of various castes, beliefs and prejudices, as well as sharp-tongued, but sensible and kindly Miss Maudie, a widow lady who grew up with Atticus at Finch's Landing. Dill decides, "There ain't one thing in the world I can do about folks except laugh, so I'm gonna join the circus...stand in the middle of the ring and laugh at folks."

The contrast between the candor of the children and the cant of the adults is basic to the structure of the novel--a see-saw pattern of what seems and what is, told always from Scout's point of view, as she and the other children learn the realities of the interesting, puzzling, and ugly aspects of life.

Students need to examine the counterbalancing like and unlike elements that weave the fabric of illusion and reality. Scout is secure in the love and protection of Atticus and Jem, while guilty Mayella Ewell--Scout suddenly perceives during the trial--"must be the loneliest person in the world." Dill, the cast-off, is the one who cries when Tom Robinson, the Negro, stands hopelessly alone before the sneering prosecutor; Auntie's

inexorable emphasis on caste is in conflict with Miss Maudie's respect for integrity. Students can also identify the literary devices in both the structure and theme; the paradox of admiring vitriolic and hateful Mrs. Dubose; the ironical enlightenment of having a father who can't do anything but read, yet who coolly steps into the street to shoot a mad dog; the perplexing irony of a teacher who vehemently denounces Hitler's cruelty to the Jews but thinks that the Tom Robinson trial has taught the local Negroes a lesson--"They were gettin' way above themselves." Scout and Jem are a white minority in the Negro Church, Underwood, Raymond, and so on and on.

At the beginning of the story Scout lives on two levels at once. After the fantasy of her daytime play, she sits in the lap of Atticus, her widowed father, and reads the papers with him. She is a precocious child and is allowed to ask questions. From Atticus' careful, judicial and simple answers, she learns--in the abstract, at least--about truth, justice, and the law.

She soon has a personal acquaintance with the law. She decides that she does not want to go back to school after one day of boredom and the humiliation of being whipped for trying to be helpful. The Cunninghams stay out sometimes to do field work for their father, she argues. The Ewells attend only one day each year. Atticus explains that the law is "bent" for the Ewells. The father drinks up all of the welfare money, so people ignore the law and let him hunt out of season and keep the children out of school to comb the dump, behind which they live. But Scout is of the "common folks" and she must obey the law and go to school.

Scout, Jem, and Dill abandon their fantastic speculations about Boo Radley and try to find out the truth about him. They are still afraid. Jem boasts that he is not, he's passed the Radley Place for four years going to school. "Always runnin'" is Scout's taunt. They now engage in ingenious and intrepid attempts to attract his attention, to get a message to him on the end of a long fishing pole, to peek through his window at night. They find little gifts, apparently for them, in the knothole of a live oak tree on the edge of the Radley property near the street.

But Scout wants more exact information. Why is Boo kept inside? She goes to Miss Maudie, whose word she trusts. Miss Maudie tells her that the Radleys are punishing Boo for some youthful skylarking. "They are foot-washing Baptists," she explains. "They take the Bible literally and consider pleasure a sin." She continues, "Sometimes the Bible in the hands of one man is worse than a whiskey bottle in the hands of.... There are just some kind of men who--who're so busy worrying about the next world they've never learned to live in this one, and you can look down the street and see the results."

Since Miss Maudie serves as a kind of one-woman Greek Chorus in the novel, one reference topic might be to look up the function of the Chorus in Greek Drama. Experience with the book has shown

that it is wise to assign it to high school students old enough to understand that Miss Maudie's criticism is not of Mr. Radley's religion, but of the way he practices it. Any assessment of the part religion plays in Scout's development must be based on the many references to and her contacts with religion in the novel, and especially to the statement Atticus makes about the Tom Robinson case as "something that goes to the essence of man's conscience.... Scout, I couldn't go to church and worship God if I did not try to help that man." A reference project on "Hard-Shell" and "Free-Will" Baptists in the North early in this century is doubtless a must.

At first, justice is something that Scout demands only for herself. At Christmas when Uncle Jack spanks her for fighting with Francis, her cousin, she objects, "You ain't fair. You ain't fair." Atticus, she complains, would have heard her side of the case, too, heard that Francis has called Atticus a "nigger-lover" and a disgrace to the family. That is why she has split her knuckles on Francis' front tooth and called him a whorelady. She has to ask Uncle Jack what the term means. He has already given her strict orders not to use bad language. In the evening, Atticus explains to Jack that Scout has lately been using a cussing vocabulary in the desperate hope that he will let her stay home from school, where she has picked it up. Atticus does not like Scout's language. He has chosen to ignore it. His own language is impeccable.

In the first part of the novel the focus is on the children, even though Atticus is their magnetic pole. In the second part, the focus shifts to Atticus. He is assigned the case of Tom Robinson, a Negro accused of raping Mayella Ewell, a white girl. Atticus cannot live with himself, he tells the children, if he does not take the case. He does not expect to win. No Negro ever wins over a white person, but he does not want Tom to go to the chair until the truth is told.

Suddenly defensive about their father, who is being called a "nigger-lover," and fearful for his safety, the children gain a kind of instant maturity of vision. The Haints and Hot Steams of yesterday become insignificant when men gather in the yard one night and in the churchyard the next day to warn Atticus of troubles ahead; when the Old Sarum bunch comes to the jail at night with the clear intention of lynching Tom Robinson, only to find Atticus on guard.

Ignoring orders the next day, they go to the trial, along with the entire county--except for Miss Maudie, who sees it as a "Roman Carnival," although she does not have time that day to explain about gladiators. The trial is pure drama with Atticus the central figure. Even though Scout is only eight and Jem twelve, by this time, they are children of "a lawin' family," as Calpurnia puts it, and they understand the procedure of testimony, cross-examination, summation, and charge to the jury. Scout

having absorbed legal tenets "with my baby food." Hour after hour they listen and watch Atticus, asking questions, finding ways to discredit the testimony of Bob and Mayella, walking to the window and back, cool, polite, leisurely, and apparently casual until he makes his plea to the jury. No fantasy--all of this--but absorbing, distressing reality. Their easy, secure, careful life is a thing of the past.

In spite of having lost the case Atticus feels that having the jury stay out a long time may be, he says "the shadow of a beginning" and Miss Maudie says "We're making a step, it's just a baby step, but it's a step" toward racial justice.

Although the children's love for Atticus is crystallized by the case, it is other people who make them understand the wider significance of Atticus' efforts to free Tom. Dolphus Raymond tells Scout, "Your pa's not a run-of-the-mill man, it'll take a few years for that to sink in." When the guilty verdict is brought in, Atticus picks up his papers and walks toward the door of the courtroom. The voice of Reverend Sykes comes to Scout as from a distance, "Miss Jean Louise, stand up, your father's passin'." The Negroes in the balcony are on their feet. Belonging to him and knowing his love have been a private matter before. She now shares him with history.

Miss Maudie tells the children that Judge Taylor appointed Atticus as defense attorney because he could make a better case than anyone else. She tells Aunt Alexandra that the town is--that is, the handful of people of background in the town--paying tribute to Atticus, their highest tribute, for they trust him to do what is right. They are the ones saying "a fair trial is for everybody, not just for us; the handful of people with enough humility to think, when they look at a Negro, there but for the Lord's kindess am I."

Although the jury has brought in a guilty verdict, Bob Ewell basks in disgrace, for Atticus has showed his accusation to be phoney. Bob threatens to get Atticus, and the children live in fear. But in the final melodramatic scene, they are the ones who are attacked by the vindictive, drunken, knife-wielding man. Ironically, the person who saves them is Boo Radley, who hears their cries. The story comes full circle from the children's fantasies about Boo to the reality of his "coming out" when they need him.

Students will doubtless want to gallop through the second part of the novel to see how things turn out before going back to the trial scene to review procedures and to analyze the strategies used by the lawyers, and also to discuss some of the difficult and elusive aspects of justice that form the central theme of the book.

These are some of the topics:

Jem puzzled over the guilty verdict. Why don't the fine folks serve on juries? Why only people from the woods? Should rape be a capital offense? It's the law? Then Atticus should go to Montgomery, for he is a state representative, and change the law. Judges should set the penalties, not juries.

Atticus tells Jem that he has misgivings about the case although it was tried legally, because the verdict was based on circumstantial evidence only.

Atticus has ignored the name-calling of the townspeople, considering them still his friends. He is sanguine even after Bob Ewell threatens him. Should he have listened to the children's fears and put Bob Ewell under a peace bond? Aunt Alexandra says that Bob's "kind'll do anything to pay off a grudge." Is the broader question here what society can do to protect itself from the kind of people that Aunt Alexandra calls "trash"?

Is justice served by "bending" the law for the Ewells of the world? Would it have been better for Mayella if she had been forced to go to school?

When Atticus finally realized that Boo Radley has saved Jem and Scout by sticking a kitchen knife into Bob Ewell and that Heck Tate, the sheriff, intends to report that in the scuffle Bob was killed by falling on his own knife--then Atticus has to decide whether justice can be served by concealing the truth. Can a lawyer, who has lived by the strict codes of law, allow this? Even though Boo is returning to the prison of his house?

Some time after the trial, Atticus says to Jem, "...it's all adding up and one of these days we are going to pay the bill for it." Fifty years later we are still paying as we fumble our way toward justice for all. Students need to read this book, a kind of social history, to help them understand, through the eyes of one family, at one time, in one town of the United States some of the problems of justice. The students are the ones who must continue the search for solutions, which will not come from people like perfumed ladies of the Maycomb Missionary Society, in pastel prints, "rocking slowly, fanning gently," eating dewberry tarts, and tearfully bemoaning the deplorable conditions of the natives in far-off jungles.

REVIEWS

Bryfanski, Dedira, Editor, Contemporary Literary Criticism, Vol. 12, "Young Adult Literature" Detroit, Michigan, Gale Research Company, 1980, p. 340.

Davison, Dorothy. Editor, Book Review Digest, March 1960, to February, 1961, inclusive, New York, The H.W. Wilson Company, 1961, pp. 797-798.

Kinsman, Clare D., Editor, Contemporary Authors, Vols. 13-16, First Revision, Detroit, Michigan, Gale Research Company, 1965, p. 481.

Moritz, Charles, Editor, Current Biography, New York, The H.W. Wilson Company, 1961, pp. 260-262.

REFERENCE BOOKS

Harris, William H. and Levey, Judith S., Editors, The New Columbia Encyclopedia, New York and London, Columbia University Press, 1975, p. 1479 and p. 2335.

Nicoll, Allardyce, The Development of the Theatre, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1957, p. 36.

Perrine, Laurence, Sound and Sense, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956, Chapter 7 (Paradox and Irony), pp. 85-105.

POSSIBLE COMPARISONS

Scout to Frankie in A Member of the Wedding

The trial to that in The Caine Mutiny

EPILOGUE

Winifred Sanders' rationale for To Kill a Mockingbird is the lead article in this issue of CEJ not by chance. In 1967 Miss Sanders chaired the English Department of Lewis S. Mills Regional High School in Unionville, CT, during a censorship controversy which centered on To Kill a Mockingbird. The controversy and Miss Sanders' beautiful defense of the book are reported in John Hove, Chairman; Meeting Censorship in the School: A Series of Case Studies; NCTE, 1967. Now, as then, Miss Sanders exemplifies the courage, grace, and professional conduct of the very best sort of English teacher. Because she was brave, young people in Lewis Mills School can read about the bravery shown in Harper Lee's book.

The controversy sparked some spirited letters in local newspapers. Mr. Arnold Sweig, a Plainville attorney who retains an active interest in academic freedom and freedom of speech, sent me his letter from the New Britain Herald. Part of it is reprinted here with his permission.

STAND UP. YOUR FATHER'S PASSIN'

...Of course, you could run away from becoming an adult by living in "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm." Or, if you love your children so dearly that you want to insulate them from the "contagion of the world's slow stain," Meredith suggests a way in his "Ordeal of Richard Feverel," into whose world

hermetically sealed from evil, Nature introduced "the fruit of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste brought death into the world and all our woe."

No one seems to be around when first grade children are taught how to cower under their little desks in case of enemy bombs, although first graders can hardly gain anything from this wretched experience except to be introduced to the meaning of fear. Or are "clean" bombs less dangerous than "dirty" words?

Miss Harper Lee was a southern gentlewoman who loved the South, and that part of its tradition which produced aristocrats of the spirit, such as humanists like the lawyer Atticus by whose example and in whose reflection other people become finer people.

Her novel is an enduring American classic--an education of the heart and the spirit--and it were shameful indeed if any defense of its right to the widest public circulation as a literary masterpiece is considered necessary or desirable to be made.

"To Kill a Mockingbird" is not on trial. Nor is the teacher with the good taste to offer it to her students or the public libraries to circulate it.

The real defendants on trial before the bar of their own children are those parents who, lacking faith in the ability of children "to see life steadily and see it whole" (and grow stronger for it) would seek to deny all children an exciting, honest work of literary merit, holding a mirror to life with truth and beauty, winner of the Pulitzer Prize, translated into ten foreign languages and made into a memorable motion picture.

Will anyone say to their children:

"Stand up. Your father's passin'"?

ARNOLD M. SWEIG

In 1981, the publishers of *The American Heritage Dictionary* agreed to delete "offensive words" from the dictionary in order to make it acceptable for purchase by the state of Texas.

Barbara Parker and Stefanie Weiss (see Bibliography), p. 27.

The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank

Richard Zahner

A student looked up from her desk and saw that I was reading The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank. "That's a good book!" she said.

I thought, :how often have I heard a student give this opinion, unsolicited, of any book?" Not often in recent years. Last summer fewer than half of my students did any reading. A book like The Diary, so packed with ideas that need to be discussed, so exemplary in its honesty and style, is a rare treat: a volume that both students and teacher will agree is "a good book," a book that can re re-read and "taught" with pleasure; a book that will contribute much toward fulfilling that elusive English department objective of fostering the enjoyment of literature.

When Anne's family joined with other Jewish people to escape the Holocaust by hiding in an Amsterdam warehouse, Anne, just turned 13, started writing the diary through which she would "keep on living" after her death. Nearly 26 months later she completed what was to be her last entry, for the warehouse was raided, and less than a year after that Anne died in a German concentration camp.

* * * *

"When [Daddy] helps prepare potatoes, he has on his 'potato face,' and he would never hand over an imperfectly scraped potato; it's out of the question..."

What do you want students to do in your writing program? Surely you want them to write as Anne does, perceptively, with their own voices. You want them, as Ken Macrorie says, to put the reader "with" the writer. Over and over again Anne provides a marvelous example for the adolescent writer. She catches the image, the metaphor,, that does just what she wants it to do, and she does it by being honest to herself. The Diary is a "good book" because it reminds us of ourselves. If I am Anne's father or mother, my students (and children!) are Anne:

Going to bed: "...usually I'm called back [to the bathroom] for the various hairs which decorate the washbasin, but which are not approved by the next person."

Perception of adults: "It was always said of Mr. Dussel [a fellow resident] that...he loved [children]. Now he shows himself in his true colors; a stodgy old-fashioned disciplinarian, a preacher of long, drawn-out sermons on manners."

Richard Zahner, Past President of CCTE and of CSSEDC, is head of the English Department at Bunnell High School, Stratford, CT.

The disappearance of a cat: "I expect she's already in cats' heaven, while some animal lover is enjoying a succulent meal from her. perhaps some little girl will be given a fur cap out of her skin..."

Food: "I must tell you about the dumplings, which we make out of government flour, water, and yeast. They are so sticky and tough, they lie like stones in one's stomach--ah, well!" But, "...quite often we enjoy our poor meals."

Dealing with boredom: "We pass time in all sorts of crazy ways: asking riddles, physical training in the dark, talking English and French, criticizing books...[peering] through...field glasses into the lighted rooms of houses at the back."

Reading her own diary: "I have an odd way of sometimes, as it were, being able to see myself through someone else's eyes...Then I... browse through the pages of [Anne's] life as if she were a stranger." But, "'The unbosomings of an ugly ducking' will be the title of all this nonsense."

Nature: "It's not imagination on my part when I say that to look up at the sky, the clouds, the moon, and the stars makes me calm and patient...Alas, it has had to be...through dirty net curtains hanging before very dusty windows."

* * * *

Anne Frank in today's parlance was "grounded" for two years. What could such an existence have been like? How would a 13 or 14-year-old today handle it?

For Anne the diary was an escape. She couldn't leave the house, the "secret annexe," but she could write to "Kitty," her imaginary reader, with the detail and intimacy that we would want to use with our closest friend.

Our kids reading The Diary--and their parents--must realize, then, that for Anne both writing and reading these pages was as close as she could get to freedom, comparable to what our kids get from "going out," "partying," or "sleeping over." If a young girl talks to her closest friend about her breasts or her periods, so does Anne:

> Each time I have a period--and that has only been three times--I have the feeling that in spite of all the pain, unpleasantness, and nastiness, I have a sweet secret, and that is why, although it is nothing but a nuisance to me in a way, I always long for the time that I shall feel the secret within me again.

Certainly it is salutary for children to know that others have had the same concerns as they, and have dealt with them with humor and grace. Passages in The Diary dealing with body functions do not have to be dwelt on in class--there is much more that can and should be discussed. But neither should these passages be grounds for challenging the book. They are, in fact, a part of what gives it its authenticity for some readers of Anne's age. The Diary is a "good book" in large measure for the very reason that it does not back off from the truths of life, both great and trivial.

* * * *

And it is the great truths to which we inevitably come:

Loneliness: "A person can be lonely even if he is loved by many people, because he is still not the 'One and Only' to anyone."

Maturing: "...in the second half of the year, I became a young woman and was treated more like a grownup. I started to think, write stories, and came to the conclusion that the others no longer had the right to throw me about like an india-rubber ball."

Conflict with parents: [Draft of a letter that Anne puts into her father's pocket] "I have now reached the stage that I can live entirely on my own, without Mummy's support or anyone else's for that matter. But it hasn't just happened in a night; it's been a bitter, hard struggle and I've shed many a tear,...You can laugh at me and not believe me, but that can't harm me. I know that I'm a separate individual and I don't feel in the least bit responsible to any of you..."

Love: "Oh Peter, what have you done to me? What do you want of me? Where will this lead us?...If I were older and he should ask me to marry him, what should I answer?...Am I only fourteen? Am I really a silly little schoolgirl? Am I really so inexperienced about everything?...I am afraid of myself, I am afraid that in my longing I am giving myself too quickly...Oh, it is so difficult, always battling with one's heart and reason."

Religion: "People who have a religion should be glad, for not everyone has the gift of believing in heavenly things...Purgatory, hell and heaven are things that a lot of people can't accept, but still a religion, it doesn't matter which, keeps a person on the right path..."

Being a Jew: Who has made us Jews different from all other people? Who has allowed us to suffer so terribly up till now? It is God that has made us as we are, but it will be God, too, who will raise us up again..."

Antisemitism: "To our great horror and regret we hear that the attitude of a great many people towards us Jews has changed. We hear that there is anti-Semitism now in circles that never thought of it

before...Is discord going to show itself while we are still fighting, is the Jew once again worth less than another? Oh it is sad, very sad, that once more...the old truth is confirmed: 'What one Christian does is his own responsibility, what one Jew does is thrown back at all Jews.'"

The dehumanizing effects of war: "Doctors are unable to visit the sick, because if they turn their backs on their cars for a moment, they are stolen; burglaries and thefts abound, so much so that you wonder what has taken hold of the Dutch for them suddenly to have become such thieves. Little children of eight and eleven years break the windows of people's homes and steal whatever they can lay their hands on..."

* * * *

Class discussion of these and other universal themes that Anne keeps returning to in The Diary can convince students that they don't have to wait until they graduate from high school to enter the "real world:" that as they leaven their own experience with thought, they will increase their understanding of themselves and of others. Over and over again, pages of The Diary ring true to students. They may be encouraged to respond in their own journals--privately, if they wish, marking "do not read" on pages about which they are sensitive. Anne found her diary to be therapeutic: "I hid myself within myself, I only considered myself and quietly wrote down all my joys, sorrows, and contempt in my diary. This diary is of great value to me, because it has become a book of memoirs in many places, but on a good many pages I could certainly put 'past and done with.'"

Students may have a similar experience. While we English teachers are not expected to replace parents as psychological counselors, sex educators, or confidants, we cannot avoid discussion of the great themes of literature and life; and parents and censors must understand this.

"What were your feelings when you started having periods?" "Describe in detail a recent conflict with your father." "Do you accept the ideas of purgatory, hell, and heaven? Explain your reasons." Of course we do not assign such topics: but these are the important topics for our students. They write about them anyway: they want us to read and respond to their papers. Occasionally they make us confidants; and then we must accept the role with grace and caution.

It is this kind of discussion and writing that makes the English classroom an important and lively place, that begins to address those very abstract department objectives, and objectives of NCTE's "Essentials of English," that "literature mirror human experience," that students become "capable of functioning in an increasingly complex society," that they "exchange ideas...discuss vigorously...write honestly in the spirit of open inquiry." And doesn't your school philosophy go further, suggesting that students should learn to

see things from others' points of view, should expand their awareness of other peoples of their own country and the world, and should prepare themselves for a productive life in a peaceful world?

* * * *

It is a happy accident that The Diary survived for us to read; but it is no accident that we read it and admire it. Anne Frank, born less than five months after Martin Luther, King, Jr., had the same strength that he had, to "overcome." There are obvious differences between the two people and their lives, differences that can be explored fruitfully in the classroom. But one conclusion is inevitable: like Martin Luther King, Anne Frank has helped us to overcome.

REVIEWS

Mary Lane, "On Anne Frank." English Journal. Volume XLV, Number 5. May, 1956

Meyer, Levin, New York Times, June 15, 1952

Ludwig, Lewisohn. Saturday Review, Vol. 35, July 19, 1952

"Give the people a chance to choose between many points of view; we need a market place of ideas."

John Milton, *Areopagitica* 1644

SECRETARIAL SERVICE OF NEWINGTON
100 Market Square, Newington, CT 666-3399

OFFICIAL TYPIST FOR CEJ

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck

Paul Cervoni

High School teachers of English and social studies continue to find in Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath a worthwhile book for class study, a book that captures and holds student interest. A world-recognized classic of American literature, the novel is a literary masterpiece in its characterization and human insights, its social documentation and protests, and its near-poetic language and brilliant style. Since its March, 1939, publication, it has become a symbol of America's Depression Years of the 1930's and a part of our literary cultural heritage, depicting in its fictional Joad family the real experiences of Oklahoma Dust Bowl refugees forced off their land onto a cruel road that led to a futile California hope and a shattered "American dream." A basically angry book, The Grapes of Wrath juxtaposes its story of the Joads with a series of inter-chapters dealing with the larger social background that had produced thousands of other victims of nature and the economy. The Joads'pilgrimage to their California "Promised Land" yields only desperate experiences and cruel struggles for justice and survival. Battered but spiritually determined at the end of their quest, the Joads not only display the strong-willed American pioneer fiber, but also Steinbeck's faith in mankind's indestructible spirit and determination to survive despite the worst obstacles.

These, then, are the prime objectives for teaching The Grapes of Wrath: it forcefully presents the issues of a time in our history we must not forget; it stimulates students to think about what is right and wrong, and to pose ethical and philosophical questions which will lead them toward more enlightened future decisions; it presents fascinating characters who transcend familial and regional ties and represent a spectrum of characters ingrained with the American spirit and portrayed in other novels; it asserts a faith in the human spirit, the life force and determination of the common man to survive through all the struggles for justice our nation has endured; it provides our students with an outstanding literary model in which language and form are themselves an important focus of study.

The novel's agonizing presentation of real social issues produced the initial avalanche of coast-to-coast protests. From the moment it was published, The Grapes of Wrath was

---

Paul Cervoni chairs the Department of English at Trumbull High School, where he also teaches drama and English. He is Past President of CCTE. During his year as an exchange teacher in England, he taught The Grapes of Wrath to Sixth Form students.

attacked by those who saw truth differently, particularly in California where the book was banned and sometimes burned as obscene, fictionalized propaganda--incendiary and anti-American. It inspired such written responses as The Truth About John Steinbeck (George T. Miron, Los Angeles: 1939,) and Grapes of Gladness: California's Refreshing and Inspiring Answer to John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath (M.V. Hartranft, Los Angeles: 1939. See Peter Linsca, "The Grapes of Wrath," in Steinbeck, A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by R.M. Davis, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1972, p. 79).

For Steinbeck, however, the issues were clear. He had worked and lived with the people of his novel--the farmers, ranchers and stoop workers of California, all real-life counterparts of Grampa, Granma and Pa Joad. He had watched them move off their land in search of better land and opportunity. He had known the Noahs, Connies and Muleys who had become disaffected from their families. He had met pioneer women such as Ma Joad, women who toiled in their family roles with faith, patience and endurance while at the same time emerging into new positions of family leadership. Steinbeck's 1962 Nobel Prize citation (for The Winter of Our Discontent) read in part, "...his sympathies always go out to the oppressed, the misfits, the distressed." In his acceptance speech, Steinbeck replied, "The writer is charged with exposing our many grievous faults and failures...the writer must declare and celebrate man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit." Time and reason have vindicated Steinbeck.

The Grapes of Wrath provides students with an opportunity to study the seventy-five year chain of troubles that bred what some have called the economically "superfluous" characters of its story. The Joads and all the thousands they represent lived lives as displaced as their lands and possessions. They were of little use to anyone, least of all to the California land owners who had lured them west for starvation wages and who then denied them civil rights. Students might study the industrialization years after the Civil War, the changing economy and work forces on the cotton fields following the end of slavery. They might study the results of the Homesteading Act of 1862, including its environmental impact on the Plains. Or they might trace the great migration of tenant farmers westward to Oklahoma and the Plains. Such studies would help clarify why the forbears of the Joads, simple and oppressed rural heroes, became the "junked lives" of the 1930's, eloquently but painfully recounted in inter-chapter nine as Steinbeck recounts the process of being dispossessed:

In the little house the tenant people sifted their belongings and the belongings of their fathers and grandfathers. Picked over their possessions for the journey to the west...Harness, carts, seeders, little bundles of hoes. Sell em for what you can get. Sell that team and wagon, too. No more use for anything...

Junk piled up in a yard...

Well, take it all--all junk--and give me five dollars. You're not buying only junk, you're buying junked lives. And more--you'll see--you're buying bitterness. (The Grapes of Wrath, Penguin edition: 1983, pp. 93 and 94.)

Students can also learn that while the brotherhood of mankind usually survives in struggles for justice and long after questions have been posed and answered, problems can recur in even harsher ways. Man has been on the moon, produced and ridden space shuttles, conquered diseases, produced artificial human hearts, developed computers and communicated via mechanically-developed satellites. Yet, the student should know that mankind's survival depends as much on a knowledge of history as on skill with technology. On August 19, 1983, a front page article carried by the New York Times and entitled "Job Unrest Grows on Coast's Farms--Competition Gets Fierce Amid Wide Economic Changes" read in part:

...That unrest is rooted in sweeping technological and economic changes that have left too many applicants for too few jobs...

For years, migrant workers from Mexico were the only ones willing to take the most menial of farm labor jobs, stooping in the fields under the burning sun, working for low wages, leaving their homes to follow tiring jobs from field to field.

But now blacks, Southeast Asian refugees and white residents of local communities are competing with the migrant workers.

"It's been tough on the migrant worker this year," ..."You've got people coming out of the city, people who, because of the economy, out of desperation, are going into field work."

Labor leaders compare the situation here in the San Joaquin Valley to the 1930's, when waves of migrants from the Dust Bowl states showed up for a handful of jobs picking fruit.

The language, ideas and actions of the novel's characters might also give rise to some problems. Steinbeck's characters speak the way they do because they are basic, uneducated, rustic people often given to profane or foul language. And while the ex-preacher Jim Casey feels he no longer has a place to which he can lead his people, he changes Tom Joad's life significantly and later sacrifices his own life when he is murdered while organizing a strike. Casey's ideas about religion should be placed in the larger context of American ideas. In the article cited earlier, Peter Lisca quotes from Frederick I. Carpenter:

> For the first time in history, The Grapes of Wrath brings together and makes real three skeins of American thought. It begins with the transcendental oversoul, Emerson's faith in the common man, and his Protestant self-reliance. To this it joins Whitman's religion of the love of all men and his mass democracy, and it combines these mystical and poetic ideas with the realistic philosophy of pragmatism and its emphasis on effective action. ("The Philosophical Joads," College English, 1941, pp. 324-325, as found in Steinbeck, p. 82.)

Another area of controversy might be the scene in which Rosaharn nurses the starving man who had given his son the last of the food. Rosaharn's actions, done in quiet dignity (she had cleared the barn of everyone else), seal in gentleness and loving conviction all of Steinbeck's ideas on the brotherhood of mankind and the indomitable spirit of the common man to survive no matter what.

Students who wish to find similar themes in literature can study the development of naturalism in American literature by reading the works of Crane, Norris, Dreiser and Dos Passos. They can see other novelists as social historians in the works of Cather, Glasgow, Wharton, Fitzgerald and Wolfe. Novels such as The Jungle by Upton Sinclair can give insights into working conditions in other parts of the country. Students might read what are often referred to as the "novels of the soil," agrarian literature in which the everyday problems of rural (often transplanted) people are shown in conflict with nature and their land. Novels such as Willa Cather's O Pioneers! and My Antonia; Ellen Glasgow's Barren Ground; Ole Rolvaag's Giants in the Earth and Peder Victorious; Robert Penn Warren's Night Rider; and William Saroyan's My Name is Aram offer the student rich background as well as alternative reading.

One aspect of The Grapes of Wrath for which there is neither equal nor substitute is its prose style. Describing the knitting together of the interchapters and the narrative portions of the book, Peter Lisca details these qualities:

> These structural techniques for integrating the two parts of The Grapes of Wrath are greatly implemented by a masterful command of prose style.... In The Grapes of Wrath there is such a number of strategically employed prose styles that the novel almost amounts to a tour de force.
>
> No other American novel has succeeded in forging and making instrumental so many prose styles. ("The Grapes of Wrath," Steinbeck, edited by R.M. Davis, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: 1972, pp. 87 and 90.)

The Grapes of Wrath must be on our school reading lists, must stay on our school reading lists, and must be defended whenever challenged.

REVIEWS

Lisca, Peter. "The Grapes of Wrath," in Steinbeck, A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Robert Murray Davis, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall. 1972, pp. 75-101.

Bluestone, George. "The Grapes of Wrath," in Steinbeck, ibid., pp. 102-121.

Lisca, Peter. The Wide World of John Steinbeck. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1958. "The Grapes of Wrath" cited above and in the text of the article is taken by editor Robert Davis from this text.

Tedlock, E.W., Jr. and C.V. Wickers, eds. "Steinbeck and His Critics: A Record of Twenty-five Years." Alburqueque: University of New Mexico Press, 1957.

In 1982, while attempting to stop the teaching of certain classics, Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum succeeded in eliminating all required reading lists from St. David, Arizona high school English curriculum. Targets of the campaign: *Of Mice and Men, Lord of the Flies,* and classics by Homer, Poe, Hawthorne, Stevenson and Hemingway. In addition, the contracts of teachers who spoke out against the censorship activity were not renewed.

Barbara Parker and Stefanie Weiss (see Bibliography), p. 27.

Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger

Leta Marks

When I sat down to write this article and looked for my copy of Catcher in the Rye in case I needed it for reference, I realized that in my hasty exit from school in June I had left it behind. I didn't stop to worry, however, knowing full well that each room upstairs contained a copy in the collection of books left over from my children's high school days. There it was, shelved between Great Expectations and Huckleberry Finn, well-worn and underlined, obviously having been used in my son's English class. Why is it that so many English teachers love teaching this book? Why do so many English departments choose it as a required text and believe it to be the best book used all year? What is it about Catcher in the Rye that makes it a universal favorite, the first book to be reordered in September?

Why do we teach this book to all of our Junior classes, to students reading below grade level and to honor students as well? Is there another book that we could use in its place? What would the students be missing if we did not use this book in the classroom? Very simply: many teachers believe that Catcher in the Rye is a contemporary classic because it is a masterfully written, well-crafted, tightly structured piece of writing, with a theme accessible to students. At the same time it is a thoroughly enjoyable, moving story. Because of its artistic merit we select it for our honors class who are working on literary criticism, but all levels of readers relate to the character of Holden Caulfield, seeing him as thoroughly American, a child of modern society trying to find his way. From this book students gain insights into their own lives because they see it as a reflection of human experience, vital and real. Catcher does best what a teacher wants a book to do: it sparks questions and ideas for discussion and generates topics for writing assignments.

The complexity of the character of Holden Caulfield stimulates intense discussion, since students identify with Holden's problems. Here's a very real character, an authentic portrayal of an idealistic, sensitive American adolescent who is suffering silently with guilt and depression over the death of a younger brother, who fears his own death, who despairs about the future, who worries about his own sexuality, and who longs for communion, love, truth and beauty: yet he sees corruption and mendacity everywhere. As one of my students this year declared, "He's made up of bits and pieces of us all!"

Leta Marks has been teaching English at Bloomfield High School, Bloomfield, CT for thirteen years. She also advises the literary magazine and coaches tennis. She is the secretary of CCTE.

However, and this is extremely important, the students see that Holden has not faced his problems, that his behavior is both immature and destructive. One of the educational values of this book is that students see how "stupid" Holden is acting. They come to this conclusion without my lecturing or prompting. Perhaps critics of this book do not know that students see Holden as a failure. The students know enough to evaluate Holden's behavior, judge him, and conclude that indeed he's "heading for a fall." They are very hard on Holden even though they identify with his fears and uncertainties.

My students, on the other hand, have not experienced exactly Holden's situation. They know little about cliff dwellers in New York City and life in prep school, but they are willing to suspend their disbelief enough to accept the possibility that someone can be as rich as Holden and yet be "poor." They laugh at his antics, scorn his absurd behavior, but are relieved to know that there's someone else out there suffering from loneliness, seeking to know who he is and what he can trust in this changing and unstable world.

However, and again this is important, they do not see Holden as a hero to be emulated; they know that when Holden journeys to New York City after getting expelled from school, he has chosen a very destructive course of action: drinking and smoking too much they see as self-disgust, insecurity and even a death wish! My students know that his engaging a prostitute and being too scared to go through with the act, hanging out at bars trying to get served, and spending too much money are all evidence of a desperate yet feeble attempt to assert his masculinity and his maturity; they see that he's just too unsophisticated and too young to play that role. Reading this book will not prevent young people from experimenting themselves, but it certainly won't teach them how; and at least after reading and discussing this book, they will have some awareness of some pitfalls, and will know how foolish someone looks when attempting to escape reality <u>a la</u> Holden Caulfield!

While many other books with adolescent heroes explore some of the same ideas, I don't know another one in which the main character so realistically and openly tells his own story in his own language. There is no doubt that Salinger has successfully captured the voice, the vernacular, of a 1950's teen. Holden, like Huck Finn, emerges as a real individual, inspiring teachers to create all kinds of classroom activities from oral readings to improvisations and writing assignments asking students to imitate the diction, rhythm, and cadences of Holden's speech.

Because Holden does tell his own story, the students learn to look very carefully at his language, searching for inconsistencies and discrepancies, learning to be aware and critical

of language. They readily see through Holden's attempts to be a confident big shot and can point out aspects of his character about which Holden himself is unaware. They do ask why Holden uses so many curse words, but he doesn't teach them any they haven't heard. The kids realize (I don't have to explain once we get into the book) that his cursing shows his underlying insecurity; that he's trying to act tough when in reality he's not. As a result of our analysis of his language, they see that, while he uses some curse words, he's offended by crude references to sex and tries to erase those words from a wall.

We also see that he is irreverent in discussing religion, but is religious; he hates movies, but he knows the plots and characters of every recent one; he hates school, but discusses Shakespeare and other books he's obviously enjoyed! Hence, a close reading of Holden's language shows the fallibility of language and proves a great opportunity for students to distinguish reality from illusion and to see the purpose and function of irony. My students see how Holden fools himself, how he fails to impress people, how powerless and vulnerable he really is.

Finally, what impresses my students about the character of Holden is his innocence and his desire to protect little children from exposure to corruption; although my students have trouble believing in the possibility that there exists a seventeen year old boy who has had no experience with women! Strange isn't it that critics of this book worry that this boy might corrupt today's youth! Holden also wants to protect little children from corruption; however toward the end of the book he himself recognizes the danger of trying to protect anyone else from exposure to ideas! While watching his little sister go round and round on the carousel he admits that, "The thing with kids is, if they want to grab for the gold ring, you have to let them do it, and not say anything. If they fall off, they fall off, but it's bad if you say anything to them." After perceiving this truth, that children cannot be shielded, Holden is on his way to recovery. That there is this epiphany and the suggestion of redemption at the end of the book is another aspect of Catcher in the Rye that I like. Kids need to feel that there's hope. In too much of modern literature things fall apart at the end. Even though the adult world doesn't hear Holden's cry for help and gives him pat answers no one believes will work, one gets the feeling at the end of the book that Holden is going to return to the world. Salinger has not painted an absolutely bleak picture of American institutions.

This book lends itself to great classroom discussion because the students love reading it, enjoy talking about it, and are able to comprehend its meaning, recognize symbols, analyze characters, and see the relationship between the concrete and the abstract. Best of all, the students are able to do all

these activities individually and in groups without teacher pressure. Discussions in the classroom also generate ideas for writing. My only problem with this book is deciding whether to teach it first to capture my students early in the year, or to teach it last because nothing else works so well.

REVIEWS

Books for You, 1982, p. 209.

Carpenter, Frederic I. "The Adolescent in American Fiction," English Journal, XLVI, September, 1957, pp. 313-319.

Chicago Sunday Tribune, July 15, 1951, p. 3.

Marcus, Fred H. "The Catcher in the Rye: A Live Circuit," English Journal, LII, January, 1963, pp. 1-8.

[I]t is...certain that literature is doomed if liberty of thought perishes. ...[A]ny writer...who finds excuses for persecution and the falsification of reality, thereby destroys himself as a writer. There is no way out of this... [A] bought mind is a spoiled mind. Unless spontaneity enters at some point or another, literary creation is impossible, and language itself becomes ossified.

George Orwell, op cit, p. 65.

The Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck

Wendell H.Coogan

The uniqueness of each individual has been one of the most solid, traditional, and conservative values held by Americans ever since the time of the founding fathers. Another tightly clasped value has been the right of each person to own property and land through honest labor. Those two cherished values are posited by Pearl S. Buck as the central themes of her 1931 Pulitzer prize winning novel, The Good Earth. Because Buck chose those values as central to her novel, and because of the many honors that the novel has won in the years subsequent to its publication, it is curious that the novel has sometimes been controversial. A best seller for many, many years, it was a major factor in awarding of the Nobel prize for literature in 1983 to the author. Pearl Buck was not only a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the most pretigious and longstanding organization of mathematicians, authors, and scientists, but was also awarded many honors during her liftime by both national and international literary associations and by such distinguished universities as Yale University.

So why then should this novel, one replete with American themes, be fussed about at all? Possibly challenges have had to do with our latent distrust of things Oriental. Possibly the complaints have evolved from some overly precious responses to some of Pearl Buck's realistic descriptions of the degradation undergone by the Chinese peasants at that time. Or perhaps the objections might have centered around the status of women and the descriptions of men's relationships with women in the class-conscious Chinese society. At any rate, over the five decades since its publication, there have been challenges to the teaching of the book in the public schools. It seems prudent, therefore, to look at the objectives and themes of the book, the challenges that might be made (or indeed, sometimes have been made) and how the teacher in the classroom may deal with any parts of the book which might be challenged.

First, however, let's zero in on the question: To which group of students might the novel be most appropriately taught? Because of the language level and the cultural background necessary to understand the novel's nuances, the teaching of the book might be limited to grades nine through twelve. Attempting to survive economically and socially is a universal problem, but it relates more to the experience of young adults than to preadolescents. The problems wrestled with by Wang

---

Wendell H. Coogan is Department Head of English (7-12) and Reading (9-12) in the Wethersfield, CT schools.

Lung and his family are like those that must be dealt with by any young adult who must develop relationships with the family, the local community, the nation, and the religion. How does one actually deal with a new married partner? How does one handle the traditions of one's own ethnic backgrounds or familial inheritances? How does one cope with the taboos, mores, and legal traditions of one's community? The young American adult, like the young Chinese adult, must eventually answer all of those questions. And how is he to respond to those questions unless he is given some models? The Good Earth is one such model, an excellent one for the American teenage student. And the study of the model can be guided by the teacher who is versed in educating young people and in instructing literature in a manner calculated to benefit them.

What are the books's objectives, and how can those objectives be translated into useful teaching objectives? The 1979 guidelines published by the National Council of Teachers of English state that "Students should...realize the importance of literature as a mirror of human experience, reflecting human motives, conflicts, and values." The Good Earth is such a mirror of human experience. Its central themes are as universally American as they are Chinese:

(1) The rise of the individual through effort and hard work.

(2) The necessity of being true to one's own values.

(3) The value of kindness and loyalty (especially in family groupings).

(4) The devaluation of social systems based upon class (including servitude of poverty and servitude of sex).

(5) The value of caring for the land.

The theme of the rise of the individual through his own hard work is hardly parochial to the Chinese. The sweat of the brow ethic has been American ever since the time of the Puritans. Being true to our own values has been reiterated by such typically American writers as Hawthorne, Mark Twain, and Hemingway. Wang Lung finds that as long as he acts in a manner consistent with his own ideals, he prospers; when, however, he decides to veer from those values, he deteriorates and gets into trouble. The same is true for the values of kindness and loyalty. When Wang Lung is kind and charitable, he invariably feels self fulfilled. Disloyalty and cruelty, however, rebound to make him miserable. That situation is especially highlighted in his relationship to his mentally retarded daughter, who is totally dependent upon Wang Lung and the other family members. It is one of the few items of

self-satisfaction for Wang Lung that he can look back upon the times of starvation and remember that he, even though tempted, never sold the poor foolish daughter into servitude, although that solution would have been common to the peasant class at that time.

Pearl Buck also addresses the problems of the class-conscious society. The book abounds with examples of servitude based upon economic status and lets the reader determine, as the reader certainly must determine, that the situations are odious, that a class society is unfair, and that servitude based upon sex is both wasteful and unconscionable. The character of O-lan is one of the most important characters in the story. Wang Lung's wife, she is noble, tough and resiliant. All of those qualities enable Wang Lung's family to survive. Without her, there would have been no family.

The inequity of the class system, whereby some people are doomed merely by accident of birth or by economic circumstances, is also presented objectively. The reader, coming upon instance after instance of hideous misuse of people and hideous waste of talent simply because of the stigma of class, must conclude that such a class system is specious.

Another theme of The Good Earth is the necessity of tending the land and heeding the land in a manner consistent with its great value. The ecological movements of the middle-Twentieth Century are simply a reaffirmation of those eternal agrarian values. Pearl Buck, in fact, wrote a trilogy of books, The Good Earth being only the first. In 1932 she published the book Sons, and in 1955, the book A House Divided. Those two, along with The Good Earth, were put together into a trilogy entitled House of Earth and published in 1935. The title itself demonstrates the importance that Buck gave to caring for the land and to the idea that the land is the real essence and the people simply caretakers of that land.

All of the major concepts of the book accord with Essentials of English, issued by the National Council of Teachers of English. "Students should be able to identify with fictional characters in human situations as a means of relating to others; gaining insights from involvement with literature."

Students, with guidance, should be able to identify with the characters in The Good Earth and relate to basic challenges that students are to meet in their own lives. Perhaps they will not suffer abject poverty, but they certainly will have to manage their own economic lives. They may not live in the Chinese stratified society, but they will have to contend with an American society in which "class" is largely based upon money. They will probably have to confront sexual and age discrimination. They will have to establish their own values and abide

by them even though doing so might be trying. Those are just a few of the ways that students can move from problems cited in The Good Earth to the problems which they themselves will encounter.

In the half century since the publication of The Good Earth, there have been a few rather mild challenges to the teaching of the book. Most challenges related to the teaching of the book to students of junior high school age or younger. There may have been some merit to the challenges when they applied to students who may not have the maturity to understand how adult relationships may be formed and to understand the pressures which might be brought upon adults. In the past, there have been some objections to the realistic descriptions of the poverty and degradation of Wang Lung and his family. However, these objections were raised long before the advent of the very graphic visual reporting done daily by television news. Also, the violence and poverty expressed in The Good Earth are mild compared to the fare readily available to virtually every student from the mass media. In other words, what might have seemed shocking three decades ago hardly seems so now. Because rapid migratory movement in our society will bring modern young adults into collision with many styles of life, students must learn to deal, psychologically and practically, with those situations, in order to maintain their own systems of values and self respect. In classroom discussions of models such as those presented in The Good Earth students can practice that kind of confrontation.

Another past challenge to the teaching of The Good Earth was based upon two specific aspects of the book. Chapter 3 describes the childbirth of Wang Lung's and O-lan's first son, and chapters 18 and 19 deal with Wang Lung's visit to the teahouse, a house of ill repute. A pre-reading of those scenes by the teacher will show that both scenes are circumspect. Given modern medical documentaries and soap operas, the childbirth scene depicted in The Good Earth will seem tame. There are no visceral references and the entire situation is handled obliquely through sounds carried to the new father from an adjoining (but out of eyeshot) room. The birthing scene is described only after the actual childbirth. The subsequent presentation of his new son to Wang Lung is tender and most discreet. The most graphic reference in the whole scenario mentions blood in a basin, as part of the post-birthing mopping-up operation. Nothing in the scene would shock any modern teenagers.

The visit to the house of ill repute more closely parallels that of a demure courting ceremony than that of a lustful, sexual experience. There are virtually no anatomical references other than the holding of hands. References to sexual union are founded in very delicate imagery and in very oblique terms. There is no mistaking the reason Wang Lung has come to the teahouse, but the author does not approve nor does Wang Lung derive

lasting joy from the experience. In fact, the experience at the teahouse is juxtaposted to the lasting and fulfilling love Wang Lung and his wife share. It is that honest and fulfilling love that Pearl Buck posits as the desirable alternative. And the teacher can emphasize that.

Some feminist advocate might object to the book on the basis that it portrays woman in such lowly status. But such an objection would only demonstrate a lack of in-depth reading by the person bringing the challenge. The outcomes of the story and the characterization of the women (in particular, that of O-lan) show that Pearl Buck makes a very strong statement about the wickedness and wastefulness of the subjugation of women in the early Chinese culture. In fact, O-lan, who is probably the second most important character in the story, is actually the foundation character who establishes most of the virtues to be derived by the reader of The Good Earth. She stands most for loyalty, for real love, for family, for being true to one's own values, for respecting the land. She is most resolute and most courageous, even more so than Wang Lung. The book is, in fact, a not-too-subtle broadside delivered for women's rights.

What better way to first hear about the realities of childbirth than through the words of a sensitive and caring author presented in the classroom of a sensitive and caring teacher? There is no better way except that of adding a sensitive and caring parent to help in doing the job. However, as the experience of most adults can testify, most parents are reluctant to confront the realities of life with their children. Many surveys have demonstrated that nearly all parents, in fact, spend very little time orienting their youngsters to the sexual and social realities of adult life. The censoring parent would be better advised to play a supportive role in instructing the children about the circumstances cited in the novel. The informed and conscientious parent can be a very big adjunct to the teacher's training in the classroom. Together they should provide the best learning possible.

How will the student profit from reading The Good Earth? In many ways. The National Council of Teachers of English guidelines state that "students should...become aware of important writers representing diverse backgrounds and traditions in literature." Pearl Buck is certainly an important writer, having been recognized by the academic and literary community for many decades. She also represents a diverse background and provides an interesting and unusual bridge between our American society and the society of the Chinese. At a time when the Oriental side of our globe exerts more cultural and economic influence upon our country, students should know the thinking and the traditions which mark Oriental cultures. The NCTE

guidelines also indicate that "students should...be able to identify the fictional characters in human situations as a means of relating to others." The Good Earth delineates many strong and lasting fictional characters. Those characters are placed in universal human situations which call for judgment and values. Students can be guided to identify, not with the "Chineseness" of the characters, but with the universality of the problems which they must face and the critical nature of the judgments which the characters are forced to make. The teacher can help students to recognize the universal quality of the situations and to subordinate the features of the book which pertain only to a given culture.

In an America which is becoming increasingly more disparate and complex racially and ethnically, all young people must learn how to deal with such complexities. The NCTE guidelines indicate that English teachers will be responsible, in part, for "helping all students become literate and capable of functioning in an increasingly complex society." Certainly, The Good Earth presents a superb vehicle for showing students how people from other backgrounds live, how they think, and how their cultural values influence the kinds of decisions they are forced to make.

REVIEWS

Pearl S. Buck, by Paul A. Doyle, Twayne Publishers, Inc., New York, 1965.

Meeting Censorship in the School: A Series of Case Studies, by a Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English, John Hove, Chairman, NCTE, Champaign, Illinois, 1967. (Case Study VI is on The Good Earth.)

Cavalcade of the American Novel, by Edward Wagenknecht, Holt Publishers, New York, 1952.

"The Twentieth Century," in Literature of The American People, by George F. Whicher, Appleton-Century Crofts, New York, 1951.

Non-Christians get so zealously involved in fighting pornography that they neglect wife, husband, or children--not just for a day or two but for months.

Neil Gallagher. The Porno Plague. Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany Fellowship. 1977. p. 169.

Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut

Lorraine Waido

Since Slaughterhouse-Five was published in March 1969, it has been banned from school libraries and reading lists more than one hundred times. The author himself has made several court appearances to speak in defense of his novel, and in a recent article entitled "Why are you banning my book?" he wonders why in 1981, Slaughterhouse-Five still remains on a list of "utterly intolerable books" which are the "most effective destroyer of the souls of children" (American School Board Journal, October 1981).

When it first appeared in 1969, Slaughterhouse-Five was hailed by literary critics as a significant major work by a contemporary author. The novel is still recognized as Vonnegut's finest statement of his major themes. Why then does it arouse so much controversy? And why is the novel chosen year after year by high school English teachers to read with their students? I will try to answer both questions.

Most teachers agree that Slaughterhouse-Five most appropriately belongs in an American literature or contemporary literature course for senior high school students (grades 10, 11, and 12). The first general theme of Slaughterhouse-Five is that of strongly and sensitively expressed anti-war sentiment. Both the author and Billy Pilgrim, the main character, see war and its aftermath as the ultimate human idiocy and the ultimate evil. That vision is a key to understanding the book's other themes. It took the narrator 23 years to write this war novel that centers on one holocaust: the fire-bombing of Dresden on the night of February 13, 1945, when 135,000 civilians in an open city were massacred in what Wilfrid Sheed called "the greatest single atrocity ever committed by Americans" (Life, March 21, 1969). Vonnegut, who was a Nazi war prisoner in Dresden during the bombing, compares the cleaning of the shelters after the Dresden fire-raid to cleaning out the crematoria at Auschwitz. Vonnegut's horrifying experiences in Dresden in 1945, the escalating war in Vietnam in 1968, and the increasingly vocal and visible protests against US involvement in Vietnam, were important factors in his development of the anti-war theme. Vonnegut examines what war is and does to people, not to make sense of it, because ultimately, in his view, war is completely senseless, but to make his reader share in the feelings of absurdity and sadness.

In Slaughterhouse-Five content, theme and style are interrelated. Since there is no way that the narrator can make sense

---

Lorraine D. Waido has taught English for the past 22 years in grades 7-12. She is presently English Department supervisor in the Windsor Public Schools.

of war, Vonnegut journeys into psychological rather than chronological or linear time, thus permitting his readers to have a different perspective on the human condition. The story with its images, dreams, and unconnected episodes, takes the reader back and forth across time to view events in a spiraling, disconcerting fashion. Vonnegut's unconventional treatof war explains his use of strong, vivid language to describe specific war crimes and incidents. He chooses graphic, clear, descriptive language to portray grotesque atrocities. His aim--to leave indelible impressions on the reader's mind.

A reading of Slaughterhouse-Five is particularly appropriate to teach literary techniques and how an author uses these tools to explore and reveal his themes and ideas. The novel is rich in its use of figures of speech and of symbolism (Tralfamadore, rivers, birds, syrup), historical, Biblical, and other literary allusions (Prussian seige of Dresden in 1760, the Children's Crusade in 1213), Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's wife, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Dante's Inferno, and The Song of Roland).

But while Vonnegut's language may be offensive to some sensitive readers, and his untraditional narrative structure may present a challenge to the unsophisticated reader, often Vonnegut's use of irony, satire, and black humor give the reader the most difficulty. Teaching irony and satire is always a challenge since it involves understanding that the author's tone contradicts his words. Slaughterhouse-Five abounds in verbal and dramatic ironies about national pride and international relations. The basic irony of the novel is expressed by the British colonel in his speech to the prisoners, and by the American teacher, Edgar Derby, as he composes a letter to his wife. Both of them emphasize that Dresden will not be bombed because it is an open city. Both of them believe that the United States could never commit such a violation of human decency and that their country is in this war in order to preserve international peace. Many of Vonnegut's scenes are satiric, that is, somewhat realistic but distorted in a humorous way, in order to hold some human fault up to ridicule or scorn. For example, Valencia, Billy's wife, says to him, in all seriousness, that they must pick their silver pattern carefully because they are going to have to live with it forever. Vonnegut is holding her up to ridicule for her middle-class emphasis on the permanence of things. Vonnegut also satirizes competitive sports, chauvinism, psychoanalysis, military protocol, and the American concept of family life. While Vonnegut's peaceful scenes add up to a systematic satire on American middle class culture, the war scenes are so ghastly that the author approaches them through black humor, a form of extreme, savage satire that makes us laugh so that we shall not cry. The episode of the British soldiers is a good example of black humor. First we laugh at the fifty British officers whose incredibly high morale is a proof to the Germans that war is "reasonable and fun." Then we look back in

horror and dismay at what we laughed at, and shake our heads at the pathetic irony of their situation.

Certain characters in the novel express sentiments that are derogatory of the religious beliefs of a very sizable segment of our society. Concepts of the "just war"; self-righteousness as a force for evil; Christian revenge; man as agent and victim, and the rewriting of the Gospels by an extra-terrestrial who finds it hard to reconcile Christian behavior with Christian Scripture--all are treated with irony, satire, or black humor.

Slaughterhouse-Five is a perfect vehicle to teach the problems of censorship in a democratic society. Certainly Slaughterhouse-Five contains words that, standing alone, would offend some people's sensibilities. But the courts have held that words taken out of context cannot be used to condemn a book as obscene, profane, or vulgar in the constitutional sense. "To be constitutionally obscene, the matter scrutinized must be judged in its entirety." (Roth v. United States, 354 U.S. 476) And "even the Bible may be considered profane or vulgar if certain passages are considered piecemeal and without due regard given to the entire text." (Todd v. Rochester Community Schools, 200 NW 2nd, 96) The same court goes on to add: "We hold that as a matter of law, ...Slaughterhouse-Five is not obscene, profane, or vulgar in the constitutional sense. We believe it to be a serious work of quasi-fiction by an acknowledged legitimate writer. The book's dominant theme is anti-war. The subject: war, slaughter, bombing, may be obscene; the telling of the tale is not."

In preparing to read this novel, students should be forewarned of the sensitivity or apparent insensitivity of some parts of the book. They should be allowed to choose another book if they are likely to be offended. Other appropriate books a student might read in place of this novel are The Red Badge of Courage and All Quiet on the Western Front.

Generally, students want to read more books and stories by Kurt Vonnegut. In reading Slaughterhouse-Five they learn to appreciate the simple style which he uses to express complex ideas. Students gain confidence in their own ability to make connections and transitions between short scenes, parables, and fantasies. Many teenagers are able to identify with Billy Pilgrim, a sensitive person who tries to play society's games as society expects, but who is crushed by the authoritarian family and modern technology. Billy is an attractive character to contemporary young adults; although he appears crushed and fragmented, he is not defeated. Billy Pilgrim is a survivor, committed in trying to improve, not people's physical sight (even though he is an optometrist) but their spiritual vision. And this ultimate commitment to his fellow humans is why Slaughterhouse Five belongs in a high school English class.

REVIEWS

"Banning of Billy Pilgrim." Christian Century. 88 (June 2, 1971), p. 681.

Hicks, Granville, "Literary Horizons." Saturday Review 52 (March 29, 1969), p. 25.

Rowley, Peter. "So It Goes." Nation. 208 (June 9, 1969, p. 736-737).

I was glad that a paperback edition would make it available to a wider audience of young readers. But just before the contract was signed, the editor asked me to delete one paragraph from the text.

"I honestly didn't notice the paragraph until my associate questioned it," she wrote, in response to my vehement (and apparently quite unexpected) letter of protest. "She was reading the book for possible words or sentences that might be 'red flags' to parents, principals and teachers across the country..."

The paragraph is [underlined] in the excerpt below:

Then Annie pulled me over to the side of the room.
"Is Peter's mother really black?" she asked.
I sort of tightened up. "Yeah," I said. "What of it?"
"Nothing," Annie said. "It's interesting, that's all. I just finished this book about a white boy who falls in love with a black girl, but in the end they break up. I wanted them to get married. I don't see why they shouldn't, if they really love each other."
"That's what I think," I said.

It's what I think, too, and I won't deal with my sense of outrage at being asked not to say so. The book club editor wrote that, much as she admired my book, ready as she was to defend its stand on integration, she could not defend "a flat statement about sex mores to parents of fourth and fifth graders," and so was not able to offer the book "just as it stands." The choice was up to me: delete the paragraph or lose the reprint sale.

Betty Miles, "Some Thoughts..."

Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain

Norma Walrath

For its humanism--the idea that every person is worthy of respect and compassion, for its suggestion of regional differences and the need for understanding others unlike ourselves, for its satirical attack against complacency regarding the evils in our world, for its use of original literary techniques, and for its profound insight into human nature and human foibles, Huckleberry Finn is one of the most teachable books. It is especially suited for the study of American literature in the eleventh or twelfth grades. This is the time when young adults are making decisions about their lives--moral, social, emotional, academic decisions. They are making choices of jobs and friends, choices that will affect directly their behaviors away from adult supervision, away from the confines of school and home. Since Huck has to undergo the very same initiations, the book serves as a model for young people everywhere who must be initiated into the world in which they are expected to function as active, contributing adults. The choices they make, like Huck's, are ones which will determine their characters and especially their moral lives.

Above all, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a moral book. Twain brings to the fore in Huck's simplistic dialect the universal questions of quests of youth: the search for meaning, the search for the self that can stand alone under pressure, the search for significant others who offer worthy models of behavior and thought. Huck Finn is a moral, ethical book dealing with racial bigotry and human decadence, things our world offers its youth too much of today. That Huck can decide for himself to save Jim from the slave catchers is the turning point in his moral development. Here, he shows independent moral courage. Going against all the precepts of his small, religious but prejudiced community, Huck's innocence and candid observations show us the cruelty and sham in his society, and by example, in ours. Students today can learn from his experiences.

The feuds between the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons and between Boggs and Colonel Sherburn are prime examples of Twain's theme of man's pettiness against man. Sherburn's words reveal Twain's bitterness towards a society of moral cowards. Huck's description of Colonel Grangerford reveals Twain's bitterness toward a society in which hate and egotism are admired when covered in charm and fancy outerwear. Always in an impeccable suit, Colonel Grangerford may be a "gentleman" as Huck says, but he is not beyond sacrificing his own children for the sake of hate. Twain forces the young reader to look behind surface frills to the real

---

Norma Walrath teaches English in Ledyard, CT. She is Editor of the CCTE Newsletter.

motives for people's actions. Disguise, a central theme in the novel, is Twain's way of inviting his readers to develop an appreciation of the inner person. Twain forces us to judge not merely by what a character says, but by what he does; not by what apparel he wears, but by how he does justice to others.

The novel contains humor and irony as well as cynicism, however. Twain also mocks the cynicism of a Colonel Sherburn who has probably lost his humanity much before his needless shooting of the drunken Boggs. Sherburn's homily serves also to display the disillusionment of Twain who could not understand the slavery and wanton cruelty he witnessed in his own growing up. Students must face these issues. Can the hate of people be stopped? How do we prevent the needless holocausts of millions if we cannot stop the mindless hate of the people in our community, our country, no matter how different they are in color, religion or race?

The novel is representative of America. In fact, many think it to be crucial to the sociological and literary-historical study of American literature. Of course, it is dated. The book is a product of the 1880's (1884 to be exact). It mirrors a country which is beginning to boom, to grow up industrially. Such an industrial society can communicate more closely, and the figurative size of the country therefore shrinks. People learn that they are interdependent, and learning to live together is a major task of the age. It is also a major theme of the book--a white boy and black man learning to live together harmoniously. Such a lesson is valuable in our own troubled age.

Huckleberry Finn demonstrates historical reality. Historically, Americans must come to terms with the fact that the first Americans did own slaves and did profit from the often cruel, inhuman labor of others. When introducing the novel to a class, the teacher must stress these historical aspects, especially the offensive term "nigger" which has changed over the years just as the attitude about humans as chattel has changed. According to Dr. James Cox, a Mark Twain scholar and author of Mark Twain: The Fate of Humor (1966) and several essays on Huck, "'nigger' is a term of derogation and slavery the institution of derogation."[1] Mark Twain was well aware of the poignant use of the term and yet chose to use it to display the imperfect, contradictory nature of a developing democracy. Twain's use of the term is historically accurate rather than a sign of bias.

Despite this "historical truth," it is understandable that the current controversy about the teaching of Huck Finn in public schools revolves about the use of the term "nigger" and Twain's supposed depiction of the black man as a fool--ignorant, superstitious, submissive, and subservient to the white man. Recently parents in Houston, in Philadelphia, and most notably in the Mark Twain School in Fairfax, Virginia,[2] have objected to schools'

choosing to keep Mark Twain's classic required reading in American literature courses. However, a closer examination of the text and the professional handling of the subject matter could easily assuage these would-be censors' criticisms.

First of all, a teacher, a professional accustomed to dealing with the intricacies of literary styles of novelists--their use of irony, dialect, local color, narrators, humor, satire, all of which Twain uses in Huck Finn, must introduce the book with the necessary historical, moral, and literary background of the use of the term "nigger." It is often the very first concept I deal with in my classes so that students will pay particular attention to Twain's use of realistic dialect and will recognize the strong moral undercurrent in the book. This is not a novel for speedy reading. The seemingly simplistic, easy flow of Huck's narrative can be as misleading as the characters he meets on this journey to the heart of darkness, the heart of slave country, the shameful heart of an American civilization that mistreats other human beings.

No one is held sacred in Twain's satire. Even lovable Huck is seen as ambivalent and torturously unsure of what is morally right. He is torn between what his corrupt society tells him to do and what his conscience and loving spirit tell him to do. He shifts in his guises and his resolve to do "good"--a very human response. A teacher necessarily will point out the contradictions in Huck's behavior, his language, and what is considered moral good. Nor does Twain's comprehensive satire spare Jim.

Much critical comment has centered around what some have called Twain's unrealistic, insensitive depiction of Jim in the novel: he is the butt of Tom Sawyer's jokes; he is the willing foolish black whose ignorance dwarfs him in the presence of whites, even young, romantic youngsters like Tom. Well, a closer examination of Jim's traits easily cleans up these false presumptions and distortions. Above all else, Jim is a compassionate figure, a real human being with strong feelings expressed for his family, for Huck, for his personal independence, and for sacrifice and love. He is the symbolic father Huck has never had. Huck's genetic father, Pap, is a drunken, pigheaded, racist blackguard who beats and maims his only child. Throughout the story, Jim tells Huck of his desire for freedom, not a foolish wish for any man; he also speaks of his love for his wife and children, and even of his mistakes as a father. Jim shows compassion for Huck, and in their idyll on the raft they are equals, equals in humanity. Huck's sense of equality and compassion is his most notable characteristic. (He even shows compassion for the brutal Duke and Dauphin who get tarred and feathered and run out of town.) At the end, Jim is even willing to sacrifice himself and his freedom to save Tom's wounded leg. Some may call this act foolish,

but it is not the action of a fool. Some may call this submissive, the black man deferring to the white, but it is the heroic act of a peaceful man. No, Jim is not a fool. At every turn of the Mississippi, he is as shrewd as his sure escape to Jackson's Island. He is aware of Huck's dilemma as he is of his own selfhood, especially when he upbraids Huck for the terrible joke in the fog. Huck apologizes to him and his pride becomes ours. We sympathize with both these fugitives. Other examples of Jim's gentleness, honesty, loyalty, fatherhood, etc., can easily be evoked from a class of attentive readers.

That Jim was a slave and that "nigger" is an objectionable term is simply the current of contemporary history. Today readers who have seen Roots on television, presentations of the holocaust of World War II, and newsreels of man's inhumanity to man can understand the inhuman treatment of others as presented in this novel. They are aware that it is the artist, the writer in society, who often allows us to see ourselves as we are, to laugh at our follies and to correct our erring ways if we can. That is satire's purpose, and that is Twain's purpose in this novel.

We cannot stop teaching Huckleberry Finn because some people object. Twain's intent is commendable and painfully honest. To deny that some used the term "nigger" and that slaves were treated cruelly is to deny history. We cannot romanticize the evils of the world. We can only expose evils so that the young may gain insight to make the changes that are needed for a peaceful world. The remarkable quality about Twain's novel is that he exposes evil with clarity, with drama, without all that preaching and sermonizing that puts even adults to sleep. He does this through adventures and humor, with power and zest. Students enjoy this book, not only for its humor and revelations and integrity of mission, but because it is a good book to read. Huck's idyll on the raft is a dream, a dream of youth, of freedom and of moral courage. Twain does not lose sight of what man has done or what he can become. Neither do the young people who read this book. It is a "must" in the American literature classroom.

NOTES

[1]James Melville Cox, in a personal interview at Dartmouth College, April 27, 1983.

[2]Newspaper clippings from The Day newspaper in New London, Connecticut dated 2/18/82; 4/8/82; 5/10/82 and others in 1982.

REVIEWS

Branch, Edgar, "Mark Twain and J.D. Salinger: A Study in Literary Continuity," American Quarterly, 9:144-58, Summer, 1957.

Kaplan, Charles, "Holden and Huck: The Odysseys of Youth," College English, 18:76-80, November, 1956.

Rubenstein, Gilbert M., "The Moral Structure of Huckleberry Finn," College English, 18:72-6, November, 1956.

Nineteen Eighty-four by George Orwell

Roy Ogren

When Nineteen Eighty-four appeared thirty-four years ago, it was hailed by novelist James Hilton in the New York Herald Tribune as a "virtuoso literary performance with a sustained brilliance that has rarely been matched in other works of its genre." Eminent literary critic Lionel Trilling proclaimed, "Nineteen Eighty-four confirms its author in the special honorable place he holds in our intellectual life.

Time has validated both of these appraisals, for Nineteen Eighty-four remains as powerful, timely and important now as it was when first published in 1949--even more so as Orwell's totalitarian vision unfolds disquietingly around us: the six-and-a half foot wall screen manufactured by Kloss Video Corporation, Qube two-way cable networks, closed circuit security systems, ultrasensitive microphones, and voltage sensors which can detect heartbeat, respiration, muscle tension, and body movements from a distance contain all the components of Orwell's telescreen. To "cure" Winston of his dissidence, O'Brien employs actual psychiatric techniques like electroconvulsive therapy and flooding (intensive exposure to a phobic stimulus); political speeches, press releases and government reports are clogged with Newspeak, language designed to cloud reality, diminish thought, and weaken independent judgment. Without question, the stage is set for a degree of totalitarianism unlike anything the world has yet seen. And, as Sinclair Lewis warned in his novel of 1935, it can happen here. Physiologist and futurist David Goodman, who collaborated on the forementioned voltage sensor for humanitarian reasons, contends that it would merely take a "triggering incident" like a threat of nuclear terrorism to justify the "temporary" suspension of civil rights and imposition of martial law--also temporary, of course.

But why use this particular novel to explore the relationship between totalitarianism, technology, psychology, and language? Why not use social studies, science, and linguistic texts? Simply because, set forth in a work of fiction, the ideas are more accessible, more interrelated, and more engaging; and the sheer horror of totalitarianism is more real. We flinch when truncheon-wielding guards in the Ministry of Love crack Winston's fingers and shatter his elbow; we writhe in our armchairs as O'Brien virtually disembodies Winston with electric shock; we shudder as moist pads are applied to Winston's temples; and we, like Winston, are dazed by the "devastating explosion," "the blinding flash of light" which so numbs his mind that he consents to seeing--no, he actually sees--five fingers when only four are held up to him. Far from

---

Roy Orgren heads the English Department at Branford High School, Branford, CT.

being gratuitous, this brutality serves a specific, justifiable purpose: Orwell jolts us--and our students--out of our complacency so that we never slacken our vigil against oppression. Research on human rights violations from the dungeons of Chile and Argentina to the psychiatric wards of Moscow's Serbsky Institute will readily verify Orwell's fiction.

Orwell does more, however, than merely denounce tyranny; he also details specific strategies for acquiring and permanently maintaining power. Students therefore are sensitized to a host of social, political, scientific, technological, and even linguistic developments which foster totalitarianism.

They learn, first of all, that many technologies and psychological methods pose a direct threat to personal privacy and civil rights. The novel invites research and oral reports on all forms of surveillance, from contact microphones, which can hear through walls, to infrared telephoto lenses; on federal data banks, which contain detailed records on over 3.9 billion people; on psychological profiles used by corporations like Sears and Exxon to screen applicants and place employees; and on potential mind control stemming from brain research, psychopharmacology (the use of drugs to control mental states), and psychiatric innovations like the recently acclaimed PET scanner and the computerized analysis--electronic surveillance, really--of brain waves. Pretty soon, as in Oceania, "if you want to keep a secret, you must also hide it from yourself" (231).

In Nineteen Eighty-four Orwell also explores the power of language to manipulate and control. By analyzing the Party's use of specific propaganda techniques, like name-calling, bandwagon, and glittering generalities, then finding examples of each in the media, students learn to recognize and, we hope, to resist this type of deception.

In a more subtle and insidious perversion of language, the Party is systematically phasing out Oldspeak (standard English) in favor of Newspeak, language designed to suppress individualism and "dimish the range of thought" by eliminating all shades of meaning and by "cutting the choice of words down to a minimum" (247). By controlling language, the Party seeks to control thought and emotion, thereby securing the hearts and minds of its members.

This idea is especially disturbing because Newspeak is so prevalent in America today. In true Newspeak fashion, nouns are being used increasingly as verbs ("impact"); prefixes are being used to soften more highly charged negative words (nuclear reactor valves seldom stick shut, they just stay in the "non-open mode"); and our sense of reality is relentlessly undermined by gobbledygook and euphemisms, from the "protective reaction raids" of Vietnam to a recent Energy Department report which states that a local nuclear waste repository may be "a serious disamenity" to a community.

The objective today, as in Nineteen Eighty-four, is mind--and I suspect, in some subtle way--reality control. At times it seems that our politicans and bureaucrats actually believe their own euphemisms, as if their own sense of reality has been distorted by their attempts to shape ours. The lesson Orwell teaches is vital, for unless a democratic people can discern language which is deliberately vague and misleading, they stand little chance of interpreting official gibberish, and less chance of voting wisely. Worse yet, a populace bewildered by language which obscures reality may become apathetic and unsure of its own judgment. At that point, they--or rather, we--become easy prey for Big Brother, the strong guiding hand who knows all too well that "if one is to rule and continue ruling, one must be able to dislocate the sense of reality" (177).

The study of Newspeak also yields a valuable lesson in style, for students learn to recognize vagueness, pretense, wordiness and meaninglessness in their own writing. Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language" is very instructive here. In it he expresses his unswerving commitment to clear English and his firm belief in the relationship between language, thought and politics:

> Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits which spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble. If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly, and to think clearly is a necessary first step towards political regeneration: so that the fight against bad English is not frivolous and is not the exclusive concern of professional writers.

Toward the end of the essay, he lists six principles of good writing which students can apply immediately.

I can see two grounds--both very understandable--on which some might object to the teaching of Nineteen Eighty-four. One is the nightmarish brutality of the torture scenes. These incidents, however, are central to Orwell's purpose, as I have explained. Certainly by the time students leave high school, they must face the horrifying realities of totalitarianism.

The other grounds for objection might be the sex in the novel: the Junior Anti-Sex League is mentioned frequently, and the relationship between Winston and Julia is decidedly physical. These references, however, are intended neither to titillate the reader nor to condone illicit sex. Instead, Orwell's purposes are again so well defined that upperclassmen should be able to discuss this aspect of the novel maturely and objectively. The Party prohibits sex, except as an act of procreation, for two reasons: (1) to suppress emotion and personal freedom, which disjoin individuals from the Party by fostering personal identity, and (2) to generate frustration, "which was desirable because it could be transformed

into war fever and leader worship" (110). Furthermore, Winston and Julia's affair is "a political act" (105), a rebellion of the individual against an oppressive society and a reaffirmation of self. Thus, while sex plays an important role in Nineteen Eighty-four, Orwell's interest in it is detached and analytical.

Every reason exists to teach Nineteen Eighty-four, and to teach it now: it is a modern classic which has been acclaimed by eminent critics throughout the free world; it challenges students with thought-provoking ideas which spark discussion, composition, research, and debate; it links English with social studies and science, thereby impelling students to see their education as a whole; and it raises timely issues of vital concern to a free society. Ultimately, teaching it is one of the most genuinely American things an English teacher can do.

REVIEWS

Hilton, James. New York Herald Tribune Book Review, 12 June 1949, p. 3.

Trilling, Lionel. New Yorker, 18 June 1949, p. 78.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dieterich, Daniel (ed.) Teaching About Doublespeak, Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1976.

Goodman, David. "Countdown to 1984: Big Brother May Be Right On Schedule," The Futurist, Dec. 1978, pp. 344-48.

Gray, W. Russel. "Slouching towards Relevance, or What to Do with 1984 until 1984," English Journal, April 1983, pp. 26-29.

Hynes, Samuel (ed.). Twentieth Century Interpretations of 1984. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1971.

Koten, John. "Psychologists Play Bigger Corporate Role in Placing Personnel," Wall Street Journal, 11 July 1978, pp. 1.

Orwell, George. A Collection of Essays. New York: Doubleday, 1954.

_____. Nineteen Eighty-four. New York: New American Library (Signet), 1955.

Petrosky, Henry. "The Electronic Newspaper: An Easy Route to 1984," The Futurist, August 1982, pp. 59f.

Smith, Robert Ellis. Privacy: How to Protect What's Left of It. New York: Doubleday, 1979.

"Uncle Sam's Computer Has Got You." U.S. News and World Report, 10 April 1978, pp. 44-48.

Lord of the Flies by William Golding

Patrick L. Mc Kiernan

"I can hardly believe you, Dad," responded my teen-age daughter to my tale of Nazi tyranny. When I once stood before the starving and the dead at a slave labor camp, I too reacted in disbelief. How could humans abuse others so horribly? Such exposure encouraged the reflection:

> Of all the beasts the man-beast is the worst
> To others and to himself the cruelest foe.
>
> Richard Baxter, Christian Ethics

As young people consider selfhood, some give thought to Baxter's words. Is there that "beast" within us? An effective way to explore this question with students is to read William Golding's Lord of the Flies.

With college-bound juniors and seniors I use Lord of the Flies to probe human aggression. Some heated and lasting discussions pervade class meetings. Golding's disturbing belief about the evil within us stirs up students.

Lord of the Flies is a story about a planeload of boys aged between six and twelve who have been evacuated from England during an atomic war. Apparently over the Pacific the plane is attacked, but the English lads escape death by jettisoning in a "passenger tube" that lands them unharmed on a deserted island. There they attempt to establish a government with appropriate laws to maintain order. Not too long thereafter their concern for civilized behavior gives way to fear and ultimate bestiality. In a sense the narrative moves from rational to irrational action through the struggle for leadership between Ralph and Jack.

Young readers quickly recognize this confrontation. They see Ralph as representative of goodness and Jack as of evil, and some of them become unsettled when the latter nearly wins out. Golding relentlessly promotes the theme that at the core of all of us is a Lord of the Flies, a demonic drive capable of unlimited savagery.

The starkness of Golding's vision opens his book to possible censorship. Golding says he wrote his novel "to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature." Why expose high school readers to such a bleak view?

Literature offers vivid commentary on human conduct. Through prose and poetry, students realize vicariously the roles we play.

Patrick L. McKiernan is Chairman of the English Department at the Morgan School, Clinton, CT.

As young people live these experiences, they speculate upon their self-understanding. To follow the characters in Lord of the Flies is to wonder, "Am I like that?" Students argue extensively about the "beast" within us. Questions arise, "Are we born with it?" "Don't we learn to be bad?"

I encourage my students to evaluate Lord of the Flies. They engage in critical thinking, an exercise that challenges bias in the narrative. To counter Golding's position, I introduce other viewpoints such as that of Ashley Montagu who says, "It is much more likely that conditioning rather than 'the defects of human nature'" promotes aggression within some of Golding's boys. Dr. Harry L. Ruben states that "the ways in which we compete, the specific tools and attitudes we adopt to survive in a competitive world--all of this is learned rather than inherited."

These critics generate considerable class discussion. Students want to understand themselves. They want to believe that they are masters of their actions rather than under the control of some demon within them. In the flow of conversation, I urge my students to judge objectively. As all of us measure Golding's argument, my goal is to develop a balanced view of Lord of the Flies.

Our quest involves the major characters. Ralph has within him the potential to preserve order. So do Piggy and Simon. All are concerned about evil and want to keep it in check. Piggy is sincere as he allies himself with Ralph in their struggle to keep civilization alive. But Piggy, who represents reason, proves to be weak and incapable of effective action. Ultimately the Lord of the Flies destroys him.

Young readers struggle with Piggy's sacrifice to the beast. Some wonder how they will handle a Lord of the Flies. I encourage my students to look into themselves frequently so that they live the reading experience.

Some of them recognize Simon as the role of conscience. Really saint-like and a mystic, Simon resists the darkness within himself. He fascinates many students because he so clearly stands out against Jack and his brutal hunters. Simon initially realized Golding's most important pronouncement. The Lord of the Flies tells Simon, "You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?" When Simon attempts to tell the other boys about this remark, they kill him.

At this point in the reading, I ask my students to write an essay. They are to explore Simon's death. To help them, they read Stephen Crane's "The Blue Hotel," and Joseph Conrad's The Secret Sharer, selections dealing with human fear and aggression.

My purpose is to illustrate how complex is the issue of the beast within us. My students should avoid a simple explanation for its presence.

While the class considers this requirement, we go on with the story. Jack and his followers pursue Ralph who escapes death when a navy cruiser spots a fire on the island and rescues him along with the rest of the boys. I enjoy asking my students what message will Ralph bring back to a world still beset with evil. Will he behave differently?

After the compositions have been submitted, my students evaluate Lord of the Flies. I tell them what some critics have to say about it. Arthur T. Broes, as quoted in Contemporary Authors, believes that "if Golding is conscious of the 'darkness of man's heart,' he is also aware of the human potential for goodness and nobility. Man is for him 'heroic' as well as sick'." Other critics are less optimistic. Samuel Hynes says, "The novel tells us a good deal about evil; but about salvation it is silent." Again my ambition is to promote extensive thought about Lord of the Flies.

Many critics consider the novel as outstanding, a possible classic. As a result of this judgment, I can recommend no other book in its place. It serves so uniquely to promote self-discovery. It leads some of my students to question "the cruelest foe" view, and debate follows. At that moment I know Lord of the Flies communicates its message, and our exploration for truth becomes meaningful. Lord of the Flies has served us well.

REVIEWS

Halle, Louis J., Saturday Review, October 15, 1955.

Moran, John, Library Journal, September 1, 1955.

Stern, James, New York Times Book Review, October 23, 1955.

Harte, Barbara and Carolyn Riley (eds.). Contemporary Authors. Vols. 5-8, Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1969.

Hynes, Samuel. William Golding. New York: Columbia University Press, 1968.

Montagu, Ashley. The Nature of Human Aggression. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Ruben, Harvey L. Competing. New York: Pinnacle Books, Inc., 1980.

The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Joan Wallace

The Scarlet Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne's romantic historical novel about Puritan Bostonians of the Seventeenth Century, is an American classic which is rewarding reading generally for grade eleven students who are concurrently studying American history. The style of the writing, typical of the mid-nineteenth century, employs a challenging vocabulary (good for the S.A.T.) beaded in strings of lengthy compound-complex sentences; but despite the linguistic agility students must attempt to gain the prize of meaning, the book has remained a favorite of both teachers and students.

A timeless sensitivity to human feelings, an air of mystery, and a unique plot combine to sustain perseverance, if not utter fascination. Taught in the light of American history, this novel can awaken in the student a true appreciation for the democratic ideals of our country because the reader shares vicariously with the major characters the pain of the absence of some of our present freedoms in that Puritan theocracy.

Here is a novel ringing with truth and compassion as it presents the effects of sin and guilt, judgment and punishment, suffering and repentance, and the ultimate triumph of grace in the human spirit in spite of loneliness, alienation, humiliation, and fear. Here is a novel which illustrates the need for individual responsibility, respect for the power of individual conscience, and the human need to grapple with temptation in privacy. The reader discovers not only the cruelty, but also the ineffectiveness of the Puritan theocracy which presumed to control, if not deny these needs; and in this discovery the reader is forced to contemplate the differences between sin and crime as well as the limitations of law.

While it exposes the hypocrisy of those who would "cast the first stone" at the sinner, Hester (a young, abandoned wife caught in adultery because she has delivered a child with no legitimate father), it neither describes sexual passion, nor does it condone adultery. Indeed in Chapter 18 Hawthorne is careful to lecture the reader on the dangers to the "citadel of the spirit" when it has once been weakened by sin. But the novel does depict the cruelty generated by the sickness of prolonged revenge, and the psychosomatic illness caused by unconfessed guilt, indeed the terrible suffering following in the wake of sin. The reader is moved in compassion to love the sinner even while acknowledging the wrong of the sin. Certainly

---

Joan Wallace serves as English department head at Southington High School. A graduate of Central Connecticut State College (B.S., 1972; M.A., 1979) Joan is presently a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Connecticut.

there is much in the heroine to admire. She is hard-working, kind, generous, and long-suffering in her chosen commitment to the presence of her public punishment for her sin.

So long as sin exists; so long as humans struggle with pride, passion, anger, guilt, revenge, and remorse; The Scarlet Letter will stand as a challenge to those who would presume to banish these problems simplistically by such means as public condemnation and punishment for sin. The reader is forced to question whether any end, however noble, can justify a cruel means for its attainment; and along with this central question, he must face other questions important to all societies:

What is the line between sin and crime? Morality and legality?
How are people to measure and judge a wrong?
How is society to punish a wrong?
What is the responsibility of an individual to himself and to his fellow man as well as to his government?
What is the responsibility of government to the society which it serves and to individuals within that society?
How can we "love a sinner and do good unto him" and still maintain high moral standards in our society?

Undoubtedly these very questions plagued Hawthorne who admittedly wrote the novel in expiation for a curse on his family because of his ancestor, Chief Justice Hawthorne, who, in a spirit of righteousness, unjustly condemned to hanging many innocent victims for the crime of witchcraft. The judgmental mentality which masked the evil of the Salem witch trials is the judgmental mentality which is the real villain in The Scarlet Letter. The real hero is the individual human spirit.

Mark Van Doren has labeled as the high point of American literature the final scene of the novel when Dimmesdale, dying in the arms of Hester, utters a triumphant ignominy. "His will be done." One does not have to believe in Dimmesdale's God to appreciate the triumph of his surrender. The student can readily perceive the heroism of humility and the joy of a conscience at last free. But he can also learn why church and state must be separated, especially in a pluralistic society like ours. Perhaps most importantly, in the words of Micah, he can learn "to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly."

REVIEWS

Carpenter, Frederic I. "Scarlet A Minus," English Journal, XXXIII January, 1944, pp. 7-14.

Josephs, Lois. "One Approach to the Puritans," English Journal, L, March, 1961, pp. 449-458.

Marcus, Fred H. "The Scarlet Letter: The Power of Ambiguity, English Journal LI, October, 1962, pp. 449-458.

A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich

by Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Cicely German and Louise Biscogno

Is there any more awesome a spectre for a teacher than an irate parent and the concerned principal demanding to know why a particular book was assigned to a class? If there is, we cannot imagine it...for we met that spectre and it was a rattling experience.

The book being challenged was One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich by the Nobel Prize winner, Alexander Solzhenitsyn. It seemed the bitterest of ironies that this great literary work had been censored in the land of its origin, the USSR, and was now being threatened with censorship in the USA. The parent, who admitted reading only a few pages of Ivan, was unmoved by our appeal that less than one-thousandth-of-one-percent of the words in this masterpiece were "obscenities," or that these "obscenities" were natural and germane to the environment and the situation of life in a prison camp. The principal, too, expressed concern. "Was this book really necessary?" he asked. In the days that followed, we as teachers had to ask ourselves the same question.

Ivan was assigned to an interdisciplinary class in Russian Studies. The students were freshmen, but this novel is appropriate for all high school students. It is written in a simple episodic style utilizing the basic and direct language of the Russian peasant. This novel was selected because it afforded insights into the human condition under the most inhumane circumstances imaginable. Solzhenitsyn, according to Marvin L. Kalb, wrote a story about "little people trapped in a merciless political machine in a way that lifts it high above the level of the average Soviet 'man-loves-tractor' school of literature."

Ivan himself had asked, "How can you expect a man who is warm to understand a man who is cold?" How could we, the teachers, expect our American students fresh from their cozy homes and fueled on hot chocolate and cheerios to relate to life in a land starved for freedom? Ivan was the best vehicle not only for understanding life in Stalinist Russia but by contrast to appreciate life in a democracy.

Students read, discussed, improvised and taped a video play based upon a "day" like all other three thousand six

---

Cicely German is an English teacher at Brewster High School in New York. She teaches Sophomore Honors, Seniors and Drama, and advises the National Honor Society.

Louise Bisogno was a Social Studies teacher at Brewster High. She is now a full time writer and teaches at Western Conn. College. In addition she was a Eugene O'Neill scholar.

hundred and fifty-three days (the three extra ones were because of the leap years) in Ivan's stretch, a day paralleling the personal experiences of Solzhenitsyn. The author had been imprisoned in just such a camp from 1945 to 1953 for writing anti-Stalinist remarks in a letter to his friend. When published on November 20, 1962, in Novy Mir, a monthly Soviet literary magazine, 95,000 copies were immediately sold. Within a week Solzhenitsyn was an international hero, for he had dared to speak the TRUTH about the Soviet system. It was this TRUTH that we presented to our students.

Ivan's story is the story of tens of millions of imprisoned Soviet citizens. Forced to confess to high treason, the gentle Denisovich was sentenced to ten years in this Siberian concentration camp. Here reveille sounds at five A.M., signalling the start of a brutal workday in temperatures as low as 40° below zero. In Ivan's Gangmates (#104) the reader meets a cross section of the Soviet people. There is the recalcitrant Baptist. He hides his Bible in a "chink in the wall," refusing to give up his faith in an atheistic society. There is the father figure who takes care of his squad in an environment where every man is supposed to think only of himself. There is the young boy whose only crime was stealing milk. There is the man who always shares the packages that he receives from home, thereby showing a generosity of spirit not dictated by Socialism. There is the intellectual who holds tenaciously to his knowledge despite the mind deadening routine. Also there are the scavengers and squealers of life, who cannot be escaped.

Under the watchful eyes of the guards and their dogs, Ivan and his comrades build a wall for a power plant "that they'd stopped work on in the autumn." They are doubly motivated: First by the horror of punishment like the "cooler" (an outdoor cell without food or blankets) or by being shot by the guards. Secondly they are motivated by their pride in their manhood and the pleasure of work well done. Despite these heinous conditions, the men do their job with dignity and pride. As Ivan, the bricklayer, said, "When you worked for the knowing, you gave them quality." Work--work--work--and more work. That was all there was to look forward to, and every day was like every other day. Ivan summarizes this in his statement, "Life in camp wore him out. From reveille to bedtime there was not a second for idle reflection." Everything was completely regimented. They did not even have the freedom to relax on a Sunday. Still, at the end of this particularly trying day, Ivan Denisovich could count his blessings when he crawled upon his sheetless cot. It had been for Ivan, "A day without a dark cloud." Almost a happy one. He had had many strokes of luck that day: They hadn't put him into the cooler. They hadn't sent his gang to work in the Socialist Community Development. He had swiped an extra bowl of kasha at dinner. The gang leader had foxed the

rates well. He had built a wall and had enjoyed doing it. He had smuggled a piece of steel through the line of guards, and he had earned a favor from Caesar that evening. Also he had purchased some tobacco, and he hadn't fallen ill.

Students wrote of their impressions of the book. All stated that this novel reaffirmed their faith in the United States of America and our democratic system. Others contrasted our government by checks and balances to the monolithic police state of the USSR. All seemed to realize the many material benefits that we enjoy in our capitalistic society. All seemed to realize that even more important is the peace of mind afforded by living in a country where no man's home can be invaded or searched without a warrant. Moreover no man can be forced into self incrimination or tried and tossed into the isolation of a concentration camp because our freedoms are constitutionally guaranteed. Freedom in Russia is an extinct mammoth frozen in the Siberian ice.

Our students addressed themselves to the "obscenities" contained in Ivan. They felt that the language showed the anger and frustration felt by the prisoners who were treated as the garbage heap of civilization. The cursing provided some minor relief from their pain and degradation. They understood that the prisoners could not complain to their guards, so those imprisoned expressed their hopelessness in epithets.

Was One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich necessary reading for our students in Russian Studies? Absolutely! We presented our case for the Freedom to Read to our Principal. No student was "required" to read Ivan if he/she felt uncomfortable with the language. In the near decade since this incident with the angry parent, hundreds of our students have read the book. Not ONE student has declined.

REVIEWS

Alfred Kazin, "Tired of Solzhenitsyn?," in The Village Voice May 30, 1974, pp. 18-19.

Sergei Levitzky, in The Politics of Twentieth-Century Novelists, edited by George Panichas, Hawthorn, 1971, pp. 207-14.

Abraham Rothberg, "One Day--Four Decades: Solzhenitsyn's Hold on Reality," in Southwest Review, Spring, 1971, pp. 109-24.

Ethan Frome by Edith Wharton

James M. Stoughton

If a teacher's admiration for a literary work is essential for its place in the classroom, I claim to possess it. Three factors have made me feel a kinship and an appreciation for Edith Wharton's Ethan Frome. One is my often laconic nature developed from my Yankee heritage; another is the fact that I was reared in Western Massachusetts near the hill towns that formed the model for the setting of the story, Starkfield. The third factor is the vivid memory of the Owen and Donald Davis adaptation of the novel produced nearly three decades ago appropriately at the Berkshire Playhouse, and starring the noted actress Betty Field in a riveting performance as Zenobia.

Before the first snowstorm has blanketed southern New England each year, I have already made basic plans to teach this novel to my junior English classes. No other American work is more permeated with the winter season in mood, atmosphere, setting, and plot than this slender book. Why should I not teach the novel against a backdrop that nature has granted as a boon?

In getting students into the mood to appreciate Ethan Frome nature's collaboration is an asset. For although every bit of symbolism is suggested by every element in the setting, it is basically the landscape itself that is predominant--buried under snow, silent, and uncommunicative. The bleak atmosphere enshrouds the prologue from the very word Starkfield through the metaphoric war imagery, "The storms of February had pitched their white tents ...and the cavalry of March winds had charged..." to the crucial snowstorm that gives the narrator the means by which to form the "vision" of his story and to reveal the ironic ending.

One of the obvious reasons for teaching any novel is the opportunity to expose students to life in a different time and place. New England readers can become sharply aware of the contrast in their locale to that of a hundred years ago. A generation jaded by television and video games finds it difficult to comprehend communication on such a primitive level of only the written and spoken word, to say nothing of the means of sluggish transportation by horse and carriage or train. Living in a mobile society, students have trouble understanding that Ethan was rooted to the soil or that Mattie had few options open to her when Zenobia dismissed her. When students accustomed to a high divorce rate and the one parent home scoff at Ethan's dilemma and accuse him of being a "wimp" for not eloping with Mattie, they fail to realize the tremendous grip that Puritanism held on its descendants, rarely allowing the possibility of a legally broken marriage.

James Stoughton is a teacher of English at East Hampton High School where he has been serving as Department Chairman.

Another and more important reason for teaching the novel to an entire class is that it is essentially a good story. What student is turned off by the eternal triangle? Even Edith Wharton was attracted to it. Ethan Frome is based on the Balzac short story "Le Grande Bretesche." She liked Balzac's story because she was interested in the role of the narrator in that tale who learns information from several reporters and pieces a story together. But she was also intrigued by the story of a suspicious husband's diabolical plot to bring ruin on his unfaithful wife and her lover. The rearrangement of roles in this story is reflected in Ethan Frome. Furthermore, Edith Wharton creates the kind of suspense that lures the reader on to the end. From the opening lines, "I heard the story bit by bit..." and the several references to the "smash-up", the reader is held captive. Even in the second chapter, the author scatters hints to suggest disaster lying ahead.

However, the striking feature of this novel is its structure. The impact of the powerful and ironic ending is achieved through the story-within-a-story. For most students this technique can be rewarding, but for others this rather oblique method of narration is too subtle.

Every piece of fiction worth its salt in any English curriculum should express a worthy theme. The theme of a man who is defeated and embittered by the adversities in his life over which he has no control is a strong and tragic one. Worn down by poverty and the demands made by physical illness, he is prevented from being the man he dreams to be and instead becomes a victim of the living dead, "bleak, unapproachable," and so "grizzled" that the narrator is surprised to learn that he is only fifty-two.

Why should students be encouraged to read about such a man? Because he is a loner, an outsider--the subject of many teenage novels (and of many other great American novels, too). In the opening scene of the main story, Ethan is walking along the deserted Starkfield street. Upon reaching the Congregational church he stands outside the basement window watching Mattie Silver as she enjoys the darcing at the social. Back home is his repulsive wife, fault finding, chronically ailing, and incompatible. Into his barren life has come Mattie, a girl with whom he can achieve at least a morsel of happiness, yet he is obstructed at every turn. To develop compassion for Ethan, to sympathize with him and to understand something about life's cruelty and pain are also worthy.

Ethan Frome is a compendium of every literary device and term imaginable, from foreshadowing to pathos. However, two such devices are outstanding. One is irony, the other, symbolism. The novel is loaded with irony from the smaller examples like the

disappointment Ethan experiences in not obtaining the advanced payment from Andrew Hale to the larger ones like the crushing irony in the consequence of the "smash-up": not a life in death ending as Ethan and Mattie had anticipated, but a death in life and the cruel reversal of roles disclosed in the epilogue. Mattie has turned into a helpless cripple, and Zenobia, the once chronic invalid, finds the strength to care for two broken lives and plays a perpetual game of cat and mouse with them.

As for symbolism, the prologue itself is laced with it. Ethan is referred to as "part of the mute melancholy landscape" and the narrator sees the "exanimate" sawmill and the removal of the "L" from the Frome farmhouse as representatives of Ethan's own "shrunken body." The "orchard of starved apple trees writhing over a hillside among outcroppings of slate that nuzzled up through the snow like animals pushing out their noses to breathe" suggests the outward symbol of stifled desires, a thematic undercurrent.

Ethan Frome is a novel well suited to illustrate the main components of a literary work. In addition it is an example of a perfect blending of character, plot, setting, and theme. Furthermore, its grimness is reminiscent of a Greek tragedy--pitiless, relentless, and inevitable like the coming of snow.

REVIEWS

Nation, 93: 396 October 26, 1911

New York Times, 16:603 October 8, 1911

Saturday Review of Literature 112:650 November 18, 1911

My narrator, Annie Morrison, has impulsively brought a low-cut nightgown to a slumber party to impress her friends. All the other girls are changing into baggy pajamas. Self-consciously, Annie takes the nightgown from her bag. One of girls grabs for it. "Hey, get a load of this!" "Sex-y!" another yells. That did it, Annie says, clutching the nightgown and running out of the room to change in private.

The word I was asked to change is, of course, "sex-y." The suggested substitute? "Snazzy."

Betty Miles, "Some Thoughts..."

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

Roger Dennis

When an author takes issue with an approach to life, he may attack it directly, clearly exposing the faults as he sees them. Such a straight-forward style leaves little in doubt about his attitude. Yet, more subtle writers may disguise their attack as support; that is, they pretend to favor a position when, in fact, they are exposing the failings of the topic under discussion by presenting absurdities as virtues. With this form of writing, the reader must use caution not to misread. The works of Jonathon Swift--particularly Gulliver's Travels and "A Modest Proposal"--are prime examples of this form of literary attack.

Aldous Huxley in Brave New World depicts a future society which has abandoned the verities of our society. Huxley adroitly delineates a world which, in its quest for social stability, negates individual choice, individual freedom. Mechanized slavery of conditioned human beings is this society's goal; by using science to its own advantage, the directors of this future London efficiently create people who are chemically and psychologically conditioned to love their slavery.

"I'm glad I'm a Beta. I'm glad I'm not an Epsilon."

People in this "brave new world" are decanted clones for whom private agonies and aspirations alike have been made biologically and psychologically impossible. A common attitude prevails toward natural conception, the family, religion and all forms of emotional expression: they were facets of an earlier, primitive life which has been replaced by a scientific utopia that has "Community, Identity, Stability" as its motto.

Yes, this is what has been created by these devotees of Ford, a scientific utopia which espouses the economic theory that "Ending is better than mending;" "The more stitches the less riches," a utopia wherein intimacy has been replaced by the idea that "Everyone belongs to everyone else" and where it is remembered vaguely, that in the old world "There was a thing called the soul and a thing called immortality, and a man called Shakespeare. You've never heard of them, of course."

The reader is tempted to discard Huxley's utopia as a realm of madmen whose aim is social destruction, but according to Huxley himself, this isn't the case. "The people in Brave New World are not sane (in what may be called the absolute sense of

---

Roger Dennis teaches and chairs the English Department at Avon High School.

that word); but they are not madmen, and their aim is not anarchy but social stability...achieved by scientific means...." They fervently believe this stability (which by our viewpoint reduces the human being to a robot,) enriches life by eliminating complexities of reality. There will be no square pegs in round holes in this society: eugenics, here, assures human standardization and this standardization is maintained by removing controversial, thought-provoking materials from the new people; therefore, the "...old fashioned books (are) hidden in a safe Controller's study. Bibles, poetry____." Censorship, a locking up of alternate ideas, becomes a means by which a single point of view is maintained.

The reader's shock--and fear--of a world so constructed is no greater than Huxley's. The views of the Controller are not the views of the author (confusion on this point has led to misevaluation of Brave New World). The propaganda slogans are those of a conditioned, nonfree populace. Huxley has created these characters vividly, but they do not present his message. What is his message? Does Huxley present an alternate view--one which opposes social conditioning? Yes, in the depiction of Bernard Marx and John Savage, Huxley gives us two characters who voice the failures of this scientific utopia, giving clear warnings to the reader.

Bernard Marx is different. By some chance, Bernard thinks. He is not thoroughly conditioned; something went wrong during his decantation, and he questions the perfections of his society. For one thing, he stands eight centimeters short of the standard Alpha height, making it difficult for him to get due respect from the lower castes, Gammas, Deltas, and Epsilons. Bernard is different enough to feel, to be ashamed about his society's love of social conditioning. He knows, unlike his peers, that he isn't free; they are none of them free. He would like to know "what would it be like if I...were free, not enslaved by my conditioning." When reminded that all people in his world are conditioned to be happy, he replies, "But wouldn't you like to be free to be happy in some other way? In your own way, for example: not in everyone else's way? Yet, rather than break away from the constraints of his world, Bernard simply takes soma, the peace-inducing drug supplied by the establishment. Here, through Bernard, Huxley speaks out for individual freedom, clearly identifying the major defect of this new world.

Because of his "heretical" views, Bernard is ruled "...an enemy of Society, a subverter...of all Order and Stability."

John Savage, a young man born on a reservation outside "civilization," is brought into the stable order of Brave New World. He had educated himself by reading the works of Shakespeare, and he was not decanted; he was born of woman and was

reared by a mother (an obscene term) outside civilization. Through his eyes, the reader sees clearly the defects of the scientific Eden: natural responses are deemed vulgar and individualism is rejected in favor of uniformity.

John Savage is treated as a freak; citizens of Huxley's new society flock to parties where John--with his natural responses--is used as entertainment. John amuses and shocks the citizens when he refuses to be impressed by the speed of the Green Bombay Rocket saying, "Ariel could put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes." Shortly after his arrival in London, John commits the unforgivable crime of saying that he doesn't like society, quoting lines from Shakespeare to explain his disdain. The Controller, who has dared to read Shakespeare, explains that the plays are out of date; Shakespeare made tragedies out of society's instability. This new society has total stability; hence, no one can appreciate Shakespeare. The Controller has also read the Bible. He tells John that it, too, has been ruled "old" and the God it presents has been replaced by the new God who manifests himself in absence. John questions how one is noble without a God. The answer is that this "civilization has absolutely no need of nobility or heroism. These are symptoms of political inefficiency. In a proper society like ours, nobody has any opportunity for being noble or heroic. If there is no instability, there's no need for a God. People who are conditioned are stable."

Both Bernard and John are threats to a stable society. Bernard is exiled by the Controller, and John flees of his own accord. Bernard is quickly forgotten by society, but the curious pursue John to his hermitage, making him and his primitive way of life objects of jeers, laughter, photographs. Suicide releases John from the new civilization. John was different; he was natural; he was critical; he was an individual. Like the reader, John could not exist in the world depicted in Brave New World. This is Huxley's point.

Huxley does not advocate the way of life he has drawn. He fears it. He warns us that uncontrolled knowledge, separated from the verities of human life, can lead us to a fate second in its horror only to total annihiliation. In a society where diverse opinions are exchanged for a single mode of thought, where books and art expressing a variety of philosophies are locked away, where human distinctions are made genetically impossible, it is the Calibans and monsters of Shakespeare's world that flourish, not the brave new people of a brave new world. This is Huxley's message.

Reviews

Chamberlain, John. New York Times, Feb. 7, 1932, p. 5
Cushing, Edward. Saturday Review of Literature 8:684 April 23, 1932
The Boston Transcript, Feb. 13, 1932, p. 2
Nation, 134:204 Feb. 17, 1932

A Separate Peace by John Knowles

Renana Kadden

Ever since I first became acquainted with John Knowles' A Separate Peace in 1967, I have found it to be one of the most popular and most appreciated books on my high school reading lists. I have taught it numerous times with great success and have found that students identify easily with the main character's struggles to grow up and find his separate identity. Through our lively analyses, students have realized the novel's literary merit, as well, with its carefully constructed plot, its rich symbolism and its well developed theme.

I was, therefore, quite surprised to learn that there might be objection to teaching a book that is so closely related to the hearts of adolescents and so beautifully conceived a piece of literature. Could people be offended by the close relationship of the main characters, Gene Forrester and his friend, Phineas? In working out his separation from Phineas, does Knowles's Gene evoke the all too familiar strains of adolescents, males and females alike, to extricate themselves from their childhoods, from their troubling and ambivalent feelings towards their friends of the same sex and from their own turbulent feelings of anguish and guilt at their first recognition of evil within themselves? Or are people frightened by Knowles's vision of war as seen through the eyes of Leper, the sensitive, shy naturalist, who is destroyed by its pressure and regimentation? These are indeed issues that are confronted in A Separate Peace, as they are by all of us as we grow up. And Knowles handles them with such sensitivity and skill that the reader can only feel, by the end of the book, the same assurance of his own integrity that Gene has acquired as he faces his troubling world. In addition, the reader has been enriched by reading a work that is such a powerful expression of the doubts we all experience.

Because I feel so strongly about the merits of A Separate Peace, I have consistently elected to teach it, particularly as an introduction to the novel form, to a more intellectually sophisticated ninth grade class or to a tenth grade group, as a unit dealing with identity and man's fall from innocence. While they are analyzing the structure of the novel and the evolution of Gene's character, students can learn to appreciate the subtle skill involved in the creation of a novel and can begin to explore their own vulnerabilities and their relationships with their own peers.

Renana Kadden has taught in public and private schools in the New York City area since 1966 and is presently employed as an English teacher at Avon High School in Avon, CT.

Writing in flashback form and in first person narrative, Knowles has Gene Forrester tell his story from the perspective of his return to Devon after fifteen years. Located in New Hampshire, Devon is the boarding school Gene had attended during the fearsome days at the outbreak of World War II. Upon his return, the grown up Forrester reflects on those years that were ultimately responsible for bringing about his maturation. They were years of fear for him: fear of the world war that was intruding upon his innocent adolescence, but, more so, of the evil that he felt was lurking within himself. As he faces the tree that became the predominate symbol of his own fall, as it was for Adam in the Garden of Eden, he comes to terms with the young Gene that existed fifteen years previously in the halls of Devon and finally resolves that it is "time to come in out of the rain" (p. 6).

And so he begins the narrative that has weighted him down all these years. Knowles skillfully commences these reminiscences in the summertime. Here the students can appreciate the symbolism: Gene and his roommate Phineas, known to most of the boys as Finny, are at the peak of their adolescent innocence. Not old enough to be drafted or to be exposed to any rigorous military training, they are free to take advantage of the summertime peaceful atmosphere of the school. Warmth and security pervade the campus, and Finny comes to symbolize it all. He is a spontaneous, charming, free-spirited boy who is exceptionally well coordinated and athletic. He makes up games that mimic the quality of the outside world of war (Blitzball and the Super Suicide Society of the Summer Session) and seduces the other boys into playing along with him and the faculty into accepting his antics. Gene, who wants desperately to imitate Finny, becomes his staunchest ally, but experiences growing resentment of his attachment to his friend and imagines a competition between them in which Finny must excel in athletics to match Gene's excellence in studies. This is Gene's way of distancing himself from his friend. Such distancing is common in adolescent relationships. Students recognize it readily as part of their experience. Many of the students have found themselves emulating a peer, while resenting the close attachment and wanting to sever the bond because of the power it holds over them.

When Gene realizes that he alone is responsible for the competition that has developed and that Finny has no interest in drawing Gene away from his studies, as Gene had needed to believe, Gene becomes increasingly angry at himself. "He had never been jealous of me for a second. Now I knew there never was and never could have been any rivalry between us. I was not of the same quality as he" (p. 51). Moments later, this anger directed against Finny causes the accident at the tree that cripples Finny physically and ultimately leads to Gene's

new awareness of an "ignorance" in himself, "something blind" of which we all are victims.

As the summer session comes to a close, Finny must leave Devon until the broken leg that he suffered heals. With him goes the peace that permeated the campus that summer as well as the childlike freedom that Gene experienced before Finny's fall. Symbolically, Knowles moves the center of the action away from the clear, fresh water of the Devon River, where the boys had played all summer, to the Nagumsett River which is "ugly, saline, and fringed with marsh, mud, and seaweed" (p. 68).

It is at this point that Knowles's "alter ego" theme becomes increasingly apparent, for Gene, in an effort to evoke the memory of his absent friend and to cope with his overwhelming feelings of guilt, begins to wear Finny's clothes and to defend both of their honors at all cost. His fight with the arrogant Quackenbush in which Gene is "baptized" in the Nagumsett River is an example of his loyalty to Finny and his trying to reach an "at-onement" with Finny and with himself. (Students are inevitably impressed with the appropriateness of the word.) Quackenbush himself is an insensitive, egotistical character whom adolescents easily recognize. They also know peers like Brinker Hadley, the aggressive leader who begins to badger Gene about his role in Finny's accident. Brinker imagines himself the brave soldier and becomes the great proponent of the war effort that slowly infiltrates the Devon campus as the boys begin to participate by clearing the snow from the railways so the trains carrying munitions and supplies can pass.

But the shy, sensitive Leper Lepellier serves as the real catalyst for Gene's final acceptance of his guilt and for the boy's first awareness of the ugly reality of the war. Leper, the nature lover, is ironically the first of their class to enlist in the army and finds it is not the skier's haven he had been led to believe it was; it is, in fact, a world where everything is distorted and sensitive people are crushed.

Leper goes absent without leave and calls to Gene to visit him, Gene receives his first glimpses of the destructive power of war: it can cause the good, the innocent to go "psycho", to use Leper's own term. Now, unable to control his emotions, Leper brutally informs Gene that he knows the truth of Gene's guilt, that Gene was "always a savage underneath" (p. 137). This powerful scene, perhaps the most effective in the entire novel, provides excellent grounds for the students' discovering their own perceptions about war. We must not shy away from allowing students to use the classroom as a forum for venting their ideas about such subjects. Their world is filled with images of both the glories and the horrors of the military, and Knowles's assertions through Leper help them to deal with those images.

The stage has been set for the climax when Gene and Finny must finally confront the truths that they have avoided. It comes symbolically as the last snows of winter are melting from the grounds of Devon and spring is beginning to show signs of birth. First Finny, who has refused to acknowledge the war, confronts the truth. Upon seeing Leper prowling around the grounds, Finny sadly confesses, "If a war can drive somebody crazy, then it's real all right." How aptly he has expressed his disillusionment. Students can so easily identify with his despair. But his final confrontation is one he cannot so quickly be reconciled to. In the mock trial scene that Brinker stages in the final climax, Leper describes the incident in the tree. While his story insinuates that Gene jounced the branch and caused Finny to fall, he wants no part in incriminating Gene. Only Brinker wants to destroy the enemy, Gene. Finny is forced to hear the truth he has been refusing to hear from Gene's own mouth. Rushing out of the room, so formidably inscribed as a place where "Boys Become Men," Finny tumbles down the marble stairs and breaks his leg again.

This second fall marks the beginning of Gene's real separation from Finny. While visiting him in the infirmary, Gene learns that Finny is finally able to admit that his denial of the war's existence was a defense against recognizing his own inability to participate in it. But more important, Finny has come to terms with the guilt of his friend. This final discussion, the most emotionally moving scene in the novel, is Finny's last gift to his friend, for with it Gene is freed from his burden and can now go on to mature as a separate person, no longer an extension of Finny.

The openness and honesty that Finny and Gene share in this final scene together provide yet another opportunity for students to reflect on and share their own feelings about their relationships, for it is often very difficult for adolescents to disclose what lies deepest within them, particularly those emotions that involve pain and recognition of weakness. But this scene also shows the degree to which Finny and Gene care for each other and is thus a poignant example to all of us that we need not be afraid to reveal the pain we suffer.

And so, when Finny dies, Gene sees his death as in part his own. Phineas came to symbolize to him that perfect innocence of the summer before his fall, before the war came to Devon. He was, in essence, Gene's own childhood, his alter-ego. Now that he is gone, Gene can experience his own rebirth parallel to that of the coming spring.

Before he enlists in the army, Leper says to the boys at Devon, "Everything has to evolve or else it perishes." At the conclusion of the novel, the students can understand this

statement. Finny cannot live in this world which holds the realities of war, enemies, and even guilt in your closest pals. Significantly, Gene says to him in their final moments together,

> "Phineas, you wouldn't be any good in the war, even if nothing had happened to your leg... They'd get you some place at the front and there'd be a lull in the fighting, and the next thing anyone knew you'd be over with the Germans or the Japs, asking if they'd like to field a baseball team against our side... Sure, that's just what would happen. You'd get things so scrambled up nobody would know to fight anymore. You'd make a mess, a terrible mess, Finny, out of the war" (p. 182).

But Gene can live. He does evolve, mature and grow, and ultimately accepts the war and the enemy that he fought, not in World War II, but in the halls of Devon. Knowles teaches well the lesson that the greatest battles men fight are those within themselves.

I have often taught Salinger's A Catcher in the Rye in conjunction with A Separate Peace. Catcher, too, deals with a teenager's search for identity. Other related novels might be Crane's The Red Badge of Courage or Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front. Both depict a young person's struggle to understand his role in a world that is not the ordered, pure world they had once envisioned it to be. Of the four of these, my students have most often identified with Knowles's novel. They can appreciate Gene's need to emulate Finny, to separate from him, and finally, to accept and be absolved from guilt.

Knowles masterfully interweaves his themes, develops his two main characters and constructs his plot. From the opening chapter of his novel, he skillfully selects his symbols and uses foreshadowing. The students learn to appreciate these literary techniques while they are reading a book that focuses on problems they can easily understand. Studying A Separate Peace is an experience that offers students both academic and emotional growth.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Knowles, John, A Separate Peace. Bantam Pathfinder Editions: New York, 1959

REVIEWS

Fuller, Edmund, New York Times Book Review, Feb. 7, 1960, p. 35
Kemay, Harding, New York Herald Tribune Book Review, March 6, 1960, p. 6
London Times Literary Supplement, May 1, 1959, p. 262
New Yorker, volume 36:159, April 2, 1960
San Francisco Chronicle, p. 29, June 26, 1960
May other reviews can be obtained from Book Review Digest, 1960

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck

Esther McCune

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck is taught in schools across the country because it is a valuable part of our literary heritage. It is taught as an example of Naturalism, literature which presents life and mankind as they exist in reality. The Naturalist attempts to create an actuality which is almost scientific. To do this, the author must play the role of a detached, impersonal observer who merely records what occurs. Steinbeck does refrain from commentary and explanation. Of Mice and Men evolves, primarily, through dialogue. But he is not impersonal, for we are always aware of his compassion for the little man.

The theme of the book is derived from the poem by Robert Burns in which a farmer commiserates with a wee mouse whose plans for the winter have gone awry. In Of Mice and Men, George and Lenny, two itinerant workers, save their money, and dream of buying a small farm, where they will "live off the fatta the lan'." (20) George plans to build rabbit hutches for Lenny, who loves soft things. Both men work hard and save as much money as they can, but they frequently lose jobs because Lenny is always getting into trouble. Lenny, who is large, childlike, and unaware of his own strength, finally becomes implicated in the death of a young woman. He is pursued by an angry band of ranch hands intent upon retaliation. George directs them away from the spot where he knows Lenny will hide; then he rushes to the brush where Lenny is waiting for him. As he distracts Lenny with images of farmlands and rabbits, George shoots him just before the other men arrive, and with this act destroys his only friend and their carefully laid plans.

Slim, a jerkline skinner who supervises the men on the ranch, tries to console George because he understands how painful it must be to lose a friend. No one else commiserates, for the world is indifferent to Lenny's death and George's grief.

The story has been acclaimed as analogy and allegory by critics and the public; in fact, it was Steinbeck's first commercial success. My students enjoy the book because they realize the importance of dreams and friends. They admire George for remaining with his bungling friend, realizing George would have an easier life without him. When students are asked to list their favorite books, Of Mice and Men is one

---

Esther McCune, former CCTE Executive Board member, teaches English in Glastonbury High School.

of the books most frequently mentioned, so in my class students were surprised when I read them an editorial which stated that, because of sex, violence, and coarse language parents and citizen groups placed Steinbeck's book on their lists of the ten most objectional books taught in our nation's schools.

Together, we examined the charges. Yes, we found the language coarse, but the story involves uneducated men living a hard life, and Steinbeck has recorded natural speech patterns. As a Naturalist he is justified in using this mode of speech.

Was there sex? Some students said that they could not remember any situations which involved sex, and, certainly, it is not highlighted; but there are references to sex. The ranch owner's son, Curley, wears a glove over a hand softened with vaseline "for his wife." My students quickly pointed out that Curley was an object of derision, frequently ridiculed by the ranch hands; so readers hardly accept Curley as a role model. Furthermore, he is a troublemaker who provokes a fight with Lenny, battering him unmercifully. Dazed and bleeding, Lenny reaches out for Curley's hand in an attempt to stop another blow. Unaware of his own strength, the frightened Lenny hangs on to Curley's hand and crushes every bone.

So, there is violence, but not violence for the sake of producing sensation. The scene with Curley depicts Lenny as misfit, abused and oppressed.

Lenny is involved in another scene of violence which occurs when Curley's lonely wife, longing for companionship, wanders into the barn to talk to Lenny. When she discovers that he has accidentally killed his puppy she consoles him. Throughout the story, Curley's wife saunters about the ranch in provocative clothes, flirting with the men. Now we realize that she is an unhappy young girl whose only purpose in marrying Curley was to better her lot. Lenny begins to stroke her hair because it is soft. Frightened, she screams. Hoping to quiet her, he shakes her head and breaks her neck. Lenny, a simple, gentle man, unwittingly causes destruction wherever he goes. The episode moves very slowly toward this point of destruction. It is not a lurid scene of rape and violence. Both characters are victims of circumstance. They arouse sympathy rather than salacious pleasure.

Of Mice and Men is not a book about sex and violence. It is about love, loyalty, friendship, hope, loneliness, fear, and courage. It informs us about the poor and downtrodden and their attempt to survive in an indifferent world. We, too, need hope and love to survive, and through this book we catch glimpses of our common humanity.

REVIEWS

Books for You, 1982, p. 51.
Books, February 28, 1937, p. 5. Review by Louis Paul.
New Republic, 90:118, March 3, 1937.

Animal Farm by George Orwell

Sylvester P. Walsh

Animal Farm is the story of farm animals who rebel against their slothful master and establish their own system of farm government. The rebellion begins in the vision of the animals' elder statesman, the old boar Major. At a meeting attended by pigs, dogs, horses, a donkey, hens, ducklings, sheep and a cat, Major relates his dream of the day when the animals will manage their own affairs and enjoy the fruit of their labor rather than remaining the slaves of the humans.

After Major's death the animals throw their master off the farm and set up their own government. Almost immediately, however, the government becomes corrupt. Eventually one of the pigs assumes control and the latter stage of the animals' existence is worse than it was under the humans. Finally, at the end of the story the pigs who have assumed control resemble the humans to such an extent that it is impossible to tell which is which.

Animal Farm is traditionally viewed as part of the ninth grade literature curriculum. Students whose ability levels range from very limited to gifted can read and understand it.

The book has been used to illustrate literary forms, such as the beast fable, allegory and parable. The animal characters talk and act like human beings and the story has an obvious larger significance, specifically the Russian revolution of 1917.

Another use for the book is to stimulate discussion of personal values. Students may explore their own feelings about human dignity, fairness, brotherhood, and the use of violence to achieve desired ends. Discussions are often more direct and thoughtful because the animal characters are one remove from humans; distance lends clarity.

Animal Farm can also teach students to write clearly. Analyzing and imitating (in the best sense of the word) Orwell's remarkable prose may show students how to communicate complicated ideas clearly and precisely.

Perhaps the greatest value of Animal Farm in the literature curriculum lies in the richness of the book's layers of meaning. It can be read as an almost Disneyesque fable (in fact, Animal Farm was a successful animated cartoon in the fifties), as a universal parable on the human condition, as a satire on politics, as a stylistic tour de force, or as a modern Gulliver's Travels. A

Sylvester Walsh teaches English at Timothy Edwards Middle School in South Windsor. He is a teacher-consultant for the Connecticut Writing Project at the University of Connecticut.

teacher may select any or all of these layers for classroom use depending on the unique character of an individual class. Animal Farm is an eminently teachable book.

It is as a political satire that Animal Farm may encounter objections. Unless the satire is understood as satire, Orwell may seem to be ridiculing respected social and religious conventions. For example, the basis for the animal system of government is a set of commandments which parody the Ten Commandments found in the Bible. The animals have a "national anthem," Beasts of England, which might be viewed as a burlesque of our own practice of singing a national anthem. A raven named Moses preaches the existence of a place called Sugarcandy Mountain, to which all animals go when they die. In these scenes and others Orwell is poking fun at organized religion as practiced by some of its leaders. (Specifically he is caricaturing the Church of England as an arm of the government of Great Britain in his day.) Like Orwell, the Bible and many religious leaders have recognized that people often do not live according to their faiths.

Only one scene in the book might seriously be considered an object of censorship. At one point one of the pigs makes a design for a windmill on the farm. A rival pig inspects the plans and proceeds to urinate on them as an indication of his opinion of them.

Those who object to the book should know that satire is essentially an attempt by the author to correct a social ill by holding it up to ridicule. In this way even the pig's urination is a legitimate component of the entire pattern of satire in the book, rather than an attempt at "barnyard humor."

Obviously the impact of Animal Farm--its fun, its social consciousness, its pathos, its political humor, its unique humanity--can be felt by a student only if he has read Animal Farm in its entirety. If an individual student declines to read the book, that student might be encouraged to read other beast fables (La Fontaine, Chaucer), other satires (Twain) or other novels written from a political base (Dos Passos). But Animal Farm is really one of a kind, and no substitute will do. The urination scene mentioned earlier may well be summarized rather than read, although classroom practice shows that most students treat the section in a matter-of-fact way.

Probably Animal Farm needs no further justification for inclusion in the curriculum beyond its excellence as literature. Its reputation as a classic of our century seems secure. It is a book enjoyed by young people and a book that lends itself readily to classroom use. It seems inevitable, if this has not already happened, that the name of Orwell will take its place along with the names of Dickens, Homer, Kipling, Stevenson, Steinbeck, and other authors who serve as introductions to the heritage of literature for young people.

REVIEWS

Atkins, John. George Orwell: A Literary and Biographical Study. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1971.

Kalechofsky, Roberta. "Fables for Our Time: Animal Farm and 1984," George Orwell. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1973.

A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway

Jeff Bouvier

It is ironic but fitting that this rationale for the teaching of Ernest Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms is being written on the day that a new obscenity law is taking effect in Connecticut. The law deems a book to be obscene if, taken as a whole, it lacks serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value. Certainly the number of critical studies of this book in the more than fifty years since its publication testify to its serious literary and artistic nature. So it's not obscene. But that alone would not quiet a critic of Hemingway's nehilistic philosophy since the "nada y pues nada" (nothing and after that, nothing) theme of "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" is present in this book. It wouldn't satisfy people who object to Hemingway's cavalier treatment of war, sex, and death. But those critics would not be silenced by any explanation of Hemingway's seriousness of purpose in attempting to document the human effort to achieve ideal values. Those critics are coming from a far more basic place--a place that some believe is often not very well-lighted.

For this teacher the question becomes, "Why teach A Farewell to Arms?" Hemingway's love story should be selected for the basic reason that it will appeal to the readers of Stephen King and Danielle Steele; Hemingway's war story will thrill the readers of Cujo.

What does the teacher respond if certain aspects of the novel meet with objection? The description of war at the beginning of A Farewell to Arms is among the best ever written. In a communication age with the realism of war beamed across the air waves via television, students have witnessed many authentic scenes of war. They should read authentic scenes of war. This vicarious experience may mitigate against future wars. The drunkenness of Hemingway's soldiers is but a World War I version of the marijuana use that was rife in Vietnam. The Hemingway hero (by "hero," I mean most of the men in this book, not just Frederick Henry, the protagonist) seems to be aware, or in the dawning of awareness, of nada--death being the ultimate nada. The quest for nada, or nothingness, achieved through alcohol or marijuana should be pointed out to the students as a natural, albeit unfortunate, reaction to the horrors of war.

Jeffrey A. Bouvier teaches English at Darien High School.

Hemingway's treatment of sex is almost entirely in the mind of the beholder.

> "I really love you. I'm crazy about you. Come on please."
> "Feel our hearts beating."
> "I don't care about our hearts. I want you. I'm just mad about you."
> "You really love me?"
> "Don't keep on saying that. Come on. Please. Please, Catherine."
> "All right but only for a minute."
> "All right," I said. "Shut the door."
> "You can't. You shouldn't."
> "Come on. Don't talk. Please come on."
>
> Catherine sat in a chair by the bed. The door was open onto the hall. The wildness was gone and I felt finer than I had ever felt.
>
> She asked, "Now do you believe I love you?"

One must assume that the earth moved for Frederick and Catherine--or at least for Frederick--after Hemingway tastefully closed the door in the scene above. The critic, Robert Herrick, wrote of this scene in The Bookman of November, 1929, "This, I maintain, is merely another lustful indulgence, like so many that occur between men and women...It has no significance, no more than what goes on in a brothel, hardly more than the copulations of animals." But then Herrick admits, "...I did not stay with the story beyond the Milan episodes and so am not qualified to say whether such a love 'conceived in the muck of war' finally evolved into something which I shall call beauty." What then, one must wonder, qualified Herrick to write this criticism? In this work, taken as a whole, that love does indeed become a thing of beauty. Hemingway, who is often criticized for his depiction of females, has created his most believable woman in Catherine Barkley. Catherine and Frederick's love attempts to achieve meaning rather than just to forget the meaninglessness, the nothingness, of war. They create their own clean, well-lighted place which endures until her death, the nada that she calls "just a dirty trick."

I, too, criticize Hemingway's nihilism, a philosophy that Robert Pena Warren said characterizes a world which had nada at its center and where the careful relish of sensation is the only compensation. In criticizing the world view out of which A Farewell to Arms arises, however, one doesn't thereby relegate the book to 451 degrees Fahrenheit. That would be to banish similarly 1984 because one is a democrat or The Female Eunuch because one is a male chauvinist pig.

There are experiences that humans seek out for the sheer joy of experience, the existential approach. While it

may be foolhardy to live one's entire life existentially, there can be no harm in performing some acts for pure sensual pleasure. Hemingway and his protagonists, in this case Frederick Henry, are not unbridled existentialists. Henry is a man aware of the issue of meaning in life, and Hemingway contrasts him with those who give themselves up to the mere flow of accident. Henry makes his separate peace and deserts the Italian army in search of this meaning, which he would have found had it not been for death's dirty trick. The Hemingway hero and his oft-discussed code, living in a world with nothing at its center, can realize an ideal meaning only insofar as he can maintain discipline. In Hemingway's God-abandoned world the only value that will serve man is an innate faculty of self-discipline, a value that grows out of man's essential being, in his inner nature. It seems to this writer that self-discipline, even amidst a nihilistic philosophy and the machismo that upsets so many of Hemingway's critics, is something today's teen-agers should seek.

Franz Kafka's rationale for reading applies to teaching A Farewell to Arms.

> If the book we are reading does not wake us, as with a fist hammering on our skull, why then do we read it? Good God, we would also be happy if we had no books, and such books as make us happy we could, if need be, write ourselves. But what we must have are those books which come upon us like ill-fortune, and distress us deeply, like the death of one we love better than ourselves, like suicide. A book must be an ice-axe to break the sea frozen inside us.

A Farewell to Arms breaks the frozen sea, and when Frederick Henry "left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain," the reader approaches Aristotle's catharsis and appreciates Hemingway for having lived--and for having written A Farewell to Arms.

REVIEWS

Marcus, Fred H. "A Farewell to Arms: The Impact of Irony and the Irrational," English Journal LI, November, 1962, pp. 527-535.

Nation 129:497 October 30, 1929.

New Republic 60:208 October 9, 1929.

New York Times, September 29, 1929, p. 5.

Outlook 153:270, October 16, 1929. Review by W.R. Brooks.

The Learning Tree by Gordon Parks

Art Pepin

Students, particularly those of grades 9 through 11, enjoy reading The Learning Tree for its exciting plot, high readability, and frank treatment of adolescent experiences. It is a novel filled with opportunities for discussion of major themes, societal concerns and literary considerations.

Gordon Parks, a gifted Black artist, photographer, and writer, wrote The Learning Tree in 1963. Essentially it is a nostalgic reminiscence, undoubtedly largely autobiographical. The novel deals with a year in the life of Newt Winger as he passes from youth to adulthood in a small Kansas town in the 1920's. Desegregation is only beginning to affect the town. The border state setting and the era serve to place young Newt at the crossroads of the pressures which Blacks then faced. All of the Blacks in the town are economic second-class citizens. However, Newt's mother, Sarah, sees the promise in him and inspires him to be ready for the social change that she senses will come.

In the novel Newt faces the conventional tests of adolescence: mischief with peers, sexual awakening, first love, first heartbreak. However, there is more than the conventional amount of violence in the town, Cherokee Flats. There are several violent deaths, all directly tied to the economic circumstances of the inhabitants. This complex interplay of the violent and the normal is the essence of Newt's impoverished environment, but his family provides a wealth of love, pride, and identity which steel Newt as he faces many painful experiences. He is particularly influenced by his mother, Sarah, who has immense strength, vision, and morality. Under these influences he gains the poise and resolve to deal with the climactic ordeals of the novel: he courageously testifies in court against a Black man in order that a White man will receive justice; he faces the hate-filled, vicious bully, Marcus Savage; and he manfully accepts the death of his mother.

The critical obstacles which youngsters face in their development are in The Learning Tree. It has all of the classic components of the adolescent novel, and it also has a Black hero. Whatever the ethnic composition of a given class, youngsters will find themselves in the novel. Because Parks is unfailingly evenhanded in his depiction of the races, even the obvious racial inequities are presented simply and without author comment. In short, The Learning Tree is not a "race"

Arthur L. Pepin is the Chairman of High School English for the Hartford Public Schools.

novel; students of all races will and do enjoy making discoveries about growing, about family love and communication, and about courage. In addition, however, the fact that Newt Winger *is* Black offers a wealth of study objectives dealing with racial justice within the novel and with current social, economic and educational developments for Blacks.

Several literary comparisons using Parks' novel are possible and fun. Students enjoy drawing parallels between *The Learning Tree* and *Tom Sawyer* or *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Indeed, Parks has been "accused" by Faith Berry (*Crisis*, Dec. 63) of trying to write the Black counterpart to Twain's masterpiece. All three novels do share similarities of plot development, theme, and characterization, but to the dimishment of none. Identifying evidence of Twain's influence of Parks will add to students' appreciation of both authors.

Another novel that can be used comparatively with *The Learning Tree* is *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Here again there are strong similarities of plot, setting, and theme. Both Parks and Harper Lee are sensitive to many of the same aspects of racism and to the effects of love and of love's deprivation.

The Learning Tree has much to say to any youngster of any race, and it does so within the framework of a swift-paced, old-fashioned melodrama. As Nat Hentoff states in his review, it is an "absorbing fusion of adventure story and morality tale" (*N.Y. Herald Book Review*, Aug. 25, 1963). Additionally, it is rich in insights into Black family life--insights not often presented in classroom literature.

REVIEWS

Library Journal, 88:3646 (October 1963)

New Yorker, 39:209 (November 2, 1963)

Critic, 22:84 (October 1963)

Everyone in this room has a chance to change the world we live in, in however small a way. I have the chance to try and change it as a writer. You have the same chance by opening up the eyes of young people to the world around them, even to the parts of it that are scary or complex. If we all take advantage of this opportunity, I know that the heritage we leave for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren will be one we can all be proud of.

Norma Klein, "Some Thoughts..."

Ordinary People by Judith Guest

Carol Luckenbach

"How come everybody's parents think that all teenagers are doing it except theirs?" one of our students remarked during a recent class discussion. The "it" she referred to happened to be drinking, but it could have been one of any number of activities that teenagers engage in. Most parents want to believe that their children are, if not perfect, at least "good kids." They want to believe that their sons and daughters don't drink, smoke, swear, have sex, or think about suicide. They do not want to believe that even good kids do many things that their parents would not approve of, and think thoughts that might be frightening to those who love them.

Realistically, though, adults must realize that nearly all teenagers become involved in activities or experience feelings that conflict with the values, beliefs, or dreams of adults. Adolescence is by its very nature a time of conflict and crisis. If we close our eyes to the activities of our teenagers, if we ignore the conflicts and belittle the crises, our children may feel that they are the only ones having these experiences, that they are somehow different or bad.

English teachers are uniquely placed to help students cope with the problems common to adolescents. Good literature about teenagers in conflict with their parents, their society, and themselves, can help students to recognize and articulate their own needs, desires, fears, and dreams. Carefully guided discussion can provide students with responsible ways to deal with issues that often seem overwhelming to them.

Judith Guest's Ordinary People is a novel which raises many of these issues and deals with them in a sensitive and tasteful manner. The key to the novel's success is the title; it is the story of ordinary people with extraordinary problems. The focus alternates between two characters: seventeen-year old Conrad Jarrett and his father Calvin. Conrad has just been released from a mental hospital, where he had been committed by his parents eight months previously following a failed suicide attempt. He leaves the hospital in time to begin a rerun of his junior year in high school, a year which had been completely lost since he slit his wrists just before mid-terms. As one of his friends remarks, "They don't pass you on breathing in that dump if you haven't taken the final."

Carol Luckenbach, a graduate of Skidmore College and Wesleyan University, is English Team Leader at Coginchaug Regional High School in Durham, CT.

Conrad finds himself grappling with a variety of problems as he attempts to readjust to "normal" life. His friends are all seniors, with senior-year preoccupations. His teachers, remembering last year, are afraid to push him. He wants to resume his position on the swim team, but finds that the physical and emotional demands are too great. Hardest of all, his father is overly solicitous, while his mother appears not to care about him at all.

The chapters which focus on Conrad gradually reveal both the reasons for his suicide attempt and his present anxieties and frustrations. Eighteen months previously, Conrad's older brother, Buck, drowned in a sailing accident. Conrad had always tried to be just like his older brother. He feels guilty because he survived the accident, both because he is alive and because he tried not to be. "I am never going to be forgiven for that, never!"

Over a period of months, Conrad develops two important relationships which help him to regain his mental health despite his mother's apparent rejection. The first is with his psychiatrist, Dr. Berger. Witty, cynical, and eccentric, Berger never allows Conrad to slip into self-pity, often forces him to say what he has desperately resisted saying for the past eighteen months, but is compassionate, sensitive, and always there when Conrad needs him. He helps Conrad to see that he cannot change his mother or the fact of Buck's death; he can only develop his inner resources and get on with his own life. He is aided in this by Jeannine Pratt, a girl he meets early in the novel. Jeannine has her own problems, but she is essentially healthy, and gradually their friendship deepens into love.

In counterpoint with Conrad's struggles are the chapters which focus on his father. Calvin Jarrett sees his life crumbling around him. His oldest son is dead, his other son is an emotional cripple, and his marriage is disintegrating. Calvin tries hard to make Beth, his wife, realize that she cannot forever sublimate her grief in cocktail parties and tennis tournaments, but she becomes more and more icy, removes herself farther and farther from human contact. She simply cannot acknowledge the reality of her family situation. She lashes out at Calvin for telling a friend that Conrad is seeing a psychiatrist, and she tries hard to pretend that nothing is different about her life. She will not cry for Buck, nor will she acknowledge Conrad's suicide attempt.

Parents of teenage readers might object to this book because they, too, prefer to pretend that life is better than it really is. The characters in his novel are too real.

Conrad masturbates. He curses. He fights. He makes love. Worst of all, he tries to kill himself. His actions might "give kids ideas." But the elements which make Conrad real are precisely those which make this an important novel for teenage readers. Because Conrad is realistic in the "ordinary" details of his life--the language, the masturbation, the fighting--students accept more readily the extraordinary details--the suicide attempt and his first sexual experience. These are issues that need to be dealt with in the open, in homes and in classrooms. The teenage suicide rate has risen alarmingly over the past decade, with suicide now the third leading cause of death among young people. Ordinary People presents some of the causes, warning signals, and effects of teenage suicide. Class discussion might well allow the depressed teenager or the friend of one to confront the possibility of suicide and perhaps to prevent it.

Adolescent sexuality is also a reality. Near the end of the novel, Conrad and Jeannine make love for the first time. Their love-making is presented in a low-key manner, and seems to be the natural culmination of the relationship which has been developing over the course of the novel. Afterward, Jeannine tells Conrad that she was not a virgin and confesses that she feels guilty and ashamed because she didn't love the first boy she had sex with. This chapter makes clear to the reader that sex without love is meaningless and empty and points out that adolescent sexual experience often falls into this category. Class discussion can emphasize this point and help students to clarify their feelings about their own sexuality.

Although this novel deals with adolescents in a way that might make some parents uncomfortable, ultimately it should help parents and teenagers to understand each other better. Half the novel deals with Calvin Jarrett's feelings. Though he makes mistakes in his dealings with Conrad, they are honest mistakes, and he tries hard to understand and help his son while coping with his own grief. Teenagers are all too willing to blame their parents for their problems, and Ordinary People teaches them that parents have problems too. A novel which can help adolescents understand their own and their parents' feelings atthe same time is a valuable classroom tool and appropriate reading for the older high school student.

REVIEWS

Library Journal, May 1, 1976

New York Times Book Review, July 18,1976

Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes

Mark A. Olsen

It's not surprising that the favorite short story of my high ability eighth graders is "Flowers for Algernon." They often feel apart from the normal flow of the school and identify readily with a character who, like themselves, is considered different. The students are at times ridiculed for their intelligence and are sometimes made to feel guilty about being able to accomplish more than their less able peers.

Charlie Gordon, a mentally retarded individual who becomes a genius after experimental surgery, is the perfect character with whom to identify. Although he is thirty-two years old as the story begins, he is childishly naive about the world in which he lives. Because he cannot comprehend the baser motivations of the people around him who constantly take advantage of him, he is protected by a childlike innocence that makes him embrace life and love the world.

Many of my students long for the protection that was theirs in childhood. Their parents controlled their world, reducing bad influences, offering encouragement, and allowing the child a safe haven in which to learn. With the steady base their parents provided, the children were off in a fantastic journey of discovery. Charlie personifies that need in them, and in all of us, to remain children.

Charlie is not, however, without his goals. His limited intelligence has allowed him to perceive that he is different from most people, and he believes that if he can learn to read, he can become like everyone else. Charlie, unlike many an adolescent, believes in education. He breathes new life into gifted students' spirit of discovery. Like them also, he has an intense need to belong.

After the operation that increases Charlie's IQ to over 200, he questions his right to such a gift. If God had wanted him to be intelligent, wouldn't he have been born that way? Does man have the right to change the blueprints of creation to develop what he thinks is an improved model? Charlie is made to feel guilty for his intelligence, becoming the mirror of the gifted student who is disliked for being a "brain."

Charlie's development into an intellectual giant satisfies a need in all of us to see the tables turned on those who have ridiculed us. We seek what we perceive to be justice. Charlie's

---

Mark Olsen, a 1975 graduate of CCSU, has been teaching in the Vernon school system for the past eight years and is currently an English teacher at Rockville High School.

ability to surpass all of his teachers is emotionally satisfying to the reader. He deals with our guilt and then offers us a measure of revenge. Charlie, like the gifted student, should never have been made to feel guilty in the first place.

Charlie's revenge, like most revenge, is hollow when the effects of the operation begin to reverse themselves. Charlie may be unchanged at the end of the story from the mentally deficient individual that he was at its beginning, but the reader, like the other characters in the story, has been permanently changed. Charlie is no longer thought of as a nonentity who can be ridiculed at will without feelings of guilt because he cannot understand that the jokes are on him.

Charlie has progessed into being a person in the eyes of the other characters. The reader has always known that Charlie was a person. Through our extended awareness of Charlie's perceptions, all exceptional individuals become people--not just bodies without feelings or human emotions.

Charlie Gordon has cleansed the gifted student of his guilt and made him more appreciative of his own abilities. Charlie has provided insight into our own prejudices against the exceptional individuals of our society. Charlie has removed our blinders and allowed us to see reality with a clarity we did not have before we experienced the story. Charlie may have changed very little from the beginning of the story to the end, but the reader's perceptions are changed forever.

But my students sometimes want more. The good short stories leave a hunger in the reader to understand more about the subject. They need to be closer to the character and they want to see what happens next. Luckily, for the student who wishes a more complete version of Charlie Gordon's experiences, I can offer him another version of Flowers for Algernon, a novel.

A problem sometimes arises when adolescents read the novel. It mentions sex. Parents have complained to me about my recommendation of material that they find offensive. When I ask them specifically what it is that they object to, I usually get vague answers that end with the moral indignity they express about Charlie's liaisons when he is not married.

I cannot make parents feel comfortable about any facet of sex when they have already expressed their uneasiness. To their charges that the scenes in the novel will subvert their children, I point out to them that Charlie is thirty-two, he never forces his intentions on anyone, and his relationships are extremely unsatisfying until he can feel real love for his partner. In every respect, his behavior is exemplary when compared to prime time television or daily newspaper stories.

Charlie's problems with sexual function can also be traced, in part, to an over-protective mother. Maybe it is her inclusion in the novel that also causes some problems for parents. In any event, Charlie's questions about sex and his worries about his own inadequacies are doubts that most teenagers share. Charlie does not introduce a topic new to teenagers, he simply introduces compassion and love to a subject that has been over-sold in almost every television commercial or soap opera.

The novel examines Charlie's childhood and makes the reader understand that Charlie is not the only victim of his mental condition. His family is traumatized by Charlie's lack of ability and is torn by the need to normalize their own lives while doing what is best for Charlie. Finally, the strain is too much for the family, and it is torn apart by its refusal to accept the truth about Charlie's limitations.

Other characters in the story who genuinely care for Charlie are also left helpless in the battle to stop the reversal of the operation's effects. Charlie's battle becomes an individual's fight to accept a limited life after seeing how large the world can be when viewed from the great height of intelligence. Charlie becomes a heroic character that we admire, respect, pity, and ultimately love.

His limited understanding of his own fall may offer Charlie some small comfort, but we remember what Charlie was. His fall from the height of intellect mirrors mankind's fall from grace, be that our fall from Eden after eating from the Tree of Knowledge or our awakening from the protection and security of childhood into the questioning and ever-changing reality of adulthood. Charlie's acceptance of his lot in life surpasses his tragic fall and places him among the great characters of literature.

Flowers for Algernon works for high ability eighth graders because they have been made to feel guilty about their intelligence and about their sexual awakening. Charlie Gordon introduces compassion to both those subjects where understanding is so desperately needed. These children have already discovered prejudice and been taken in by sexual stereotyping. I can only plead with their parents not to deny them the compassion which alone can mitigate their discoveries.

REVIEWS

Reviewed by M.R. Hillegas
Saturday Review, 49:33 (March 26, 1966)

Reviewed by Stephen McKenna
Best Seller, 26:10 (April 1, 1966)

Times Literary Supplement (July 21, 1966), p. 629

The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier

Gary Giannelli

At times The Chocolate War can be almost too painful to read. It deals with ugly situations and ugly characters. It depicts the hopelessness of struggling against injustice. It shows the ultimate futility of trying to make a stand as an individual. It portrays a confined world where the good guys can make all the noble gestures of individuality they want, only finally to be stomped and defeated by more kinds of bullies than most teenage readers would ever have known to exist. What, then, is the value of teaching a novel that may, quite fairly, be labeled as a bitter, cynical view of life, that presents awful characters inflicting awful pain on perfect innocents? In fact, it is in its precise, brutally honest miniature portrait of the world as it is--not as we'd like it to be--that the value and power of The Chocolate War lie, especially as a novel for adolescents.

The Chocolate War's plot revolves around the refusal of Jerry Renault, a ninth grader at Trinity High, an all boys Catholic school, to participate in the school's annual fund raiser, the selling of chocolates. At first Jerry refuses to sell the chocolates because he's been ordered to by Archie, upper-classman leader of the Vigils, a secret organization that exists chiefly to intimidate non-Vigils and to flex its own outlawed muscle in the face of the school administration. The pranks that the Vigils engage in and the tactics they use serve primarily to reinforce its image of underground power among the student body, while investing in its members--and most particularly in its leader--a sense of totalitarian invincibility that no one, teacher or student, dares challenge.

But Jerry does challenge that authority, as well as the authority of Brother Leon, the unscrupulous teacher who actually enlists the help of Archie and the Vigils in reaching this all-consuming goal of selling all 20,000 boxes of chocolates and reaping the career rewards such a triumph of fundraising genius would yield. Jerry refuses to sell the chocolates even after being ordered to by the Vigils. For awhile Jerry becomes a school hero, fighting the battle no one else had ever had the guts to fight, but soon the full force of the Vigils and Brother Leon is brought down on the freshman who, deserted by even his closest friends, finds himself alone in a struggle that pits him against the entire school. In the novel's savage climax, Jerry is physically beaten before the entire student body, which, adopting the inhuman characteristics of mobs everywhere, literally screams for Jerry's blood. All the while Brother Leon watches from the shadows, giving tacit approval. Jerry is defeated physically and emotionally; he realizes at the end that

---

Gary Giannelli is currently on leave from his position as English teacher at Portland High School in Portland, CT.

he "dared disturb the universe"--and that he shouldn't have. The bad guys win while Jerry, the idealistic innocent who made a stand as an individual, lies bleeding and broken. It's a depressing end to a depressing novel.

The Chocolate War is a novel well-suited for high schoolers because it deals with real life issues and character types within settings and situations that adolescents will readily identify with. Most of the novel's characters may be villains, but they're real life villains. Every ninth grader can identify the bully in his school, but how many readers will recognize the varieties and more insidious types of bullies that propel events in this novel? The few physical beatings that Jerry and some of the other characters suffer are nothing compared to the unrelenting emotional poundings they are forced to endure from Archie and his cohorts. As repellent as he is, Archie is a beautifully drawn character, his motives as complex and dark and his his methods as devious as those of any literary or real life villain. Jerry is a sympathetic character whom students will recognize and with whom they can possibly identify. Jerry is not a noble hero seeking to right injustice. He's a slightly confused kid who thinks that in some way his stand against Archie and Leon will prevent him from falling into the kind of stagnant existence he sees his widowed father leading. But Jerry's motives aren't entirely clear, not even to himself. Like all human beings--and most of the characters in this novel--Jerry is a complex mass of motivations. He wants to fit in, but he doesn't want to be a sheep; he wants to make a stand, but he doesn't want to make waves. High schoolers should find the dilemma a familiar one.

The Chocolate War explores the subtleties and intricacies that provide the basis for every teen's major preoccupation--peer acceptance. But beyond the treatment of peer pressure which dominates much of the book, The Chocolate War probes the complexities of human motivation, evil manipulation, hypocrisy and isolation. In the tiny world of Trinity High exist the same kinds of conflicts that all of us face in our daily struggle through the world. Maybe very few of us will ever have to face the odds Jerry did in refusing the chocolates, but all of us will have to, at one time or another, weigh the ease of casual acceptance against the burden of adopting an unpopular position. In examining the conflicts and pressures faced by The Chocolate War's characters, young readers will come to a fuller understanding of the kinds of pressures that await them in the world beyond high school.

Because of its setting, plot, characters and themes, The Chocolate War is most appropriate for high school readers. However, its language, themes and characters may also make it a prime censorship target for parents who find its language vulgar, its characters cruel and its message pessimistic. The

answers to such objections should be based on the book's authenticity. True, the novel does include the use of such profanities as any eighth grader is likely to have been long familiar with. But the profanity is necessary in order to draw believable characters who speak believable dialogue. One can hardly expect a character as morally reprehensible as Archie, who engineers a literal bloodbath for the entire school to participate in, to draw the line of decency at uttering a schoolyard expletive. Similarly, Jerry's reactions and words are consistent with those of any teen facing enormous, almost life-threatening odds. His integrity as a character would amount to nothing if he didn't, at the least, fire off a profanity under such overwhelming stress.

A few of the novel's scenes involve Jerry's masturbatory fantasies and some parts of the book make reference to a masturbation scene involving Emile, one of the novel's seedier characters. None of the scenes is dwelt on or detailed in any explicit way. Such scenes, like the language, have to be viewed in the context of character development. Jerry is a normal, fourteen year old boy who thinks the kind of thoughts any normal fourteen year old boy is likely to think on occasion. The scenes, like the language, help establish these characters as real teens.

A more serious objection to The Chocolate War may result from what some may see as its ultimately bleak view of humanity and its message of defeat. Most of the novel's characters are morally repulsive, and Jerry, one of the novel's few "good" characters, is finally beaten physically and emotionally. The novel seems to be saying that the world stinks and it's useless to struggle for what you feel is right. To object to the book on such grounds is to miss its value as a piece of literature that shows the world the way, unfortunately, it is, not the way we'd all like it to be. By the time they've reached high school, students are well past the fairy tale stage. But while they may no longer believe in "happily ever after" endings, most students are still naive about the realities of life, with its disappointments and defeats and cruelities. Perhaps through Jerry's torturous attempts at individuality, young readers realize a truer understanding of what it is to be an individual and recognize just what kind of courage it takes to stand against the crowd. The Chocolate War may be a depressing novel, but it's an honest one. It refuses to compromise its story or characters for the sake of an upbeat ending that would belie all that's gone before it.

The Chocolate War goes far beyond the expectations of the typical adolescent novel. Its characters may be teenagers and its setting may be a high school, but this novel raises, possibly for the first time in their reading, serious questions that young readers will be faced with throughout their lives. This is a rich, thought-provoking book that has more substance and relevance jammed into its 191 pages than many of those so-called classics that high schoolers dread opening.

REVIEWS

The New York Times, Dec. 1, 1974, p. 76
The Times Literary Supplement, April 4, 1975, p. 364
Choice, Nov. 1975, p. 1132
The Kirkus Review, Jan. 1, 1975, p. 76

Go Ask Alice (Anonymous)

Lynn Banta

In the eight years that I have taught junior high school English, I have seen situations that used to exist primarily on the high school level sift down to the junior high school. Thirteen and fourteen year olds are now faced with decisions about whether to get involved with drugs, alcohol, and sex. What I found difficult to deal with at eighteen must seem even more frightening to my students at thirteen.

We, as teachers, must address these issues in class so that students can develop the inner strength necessary to make decisions that will affect their lives positively.

Literature is one means through which the English teacher can deal with these problems in the classroom. Go Ask Alice is an especially positive literary tool for doing so. This frightening account of a young girl's experiences with drugs, loneliness, peer pressure, and death provides a shocking look at the issues facing today's young adolescent.

Go Ask Alice is an edited diary written by a fifteen year old girl who embarks on a ferris wheel existence into a harrowing life of drugs. Alice begins the diary as an overweight, insecure girl seeking friends and self-confidence. She uses the diary as a best friend and sounding board. Like many kids her age, she doesn't feel as though anyone really understands her. She would like to confide in her parents, but she feels they wouldn't be able to help her sort things out. She looks to friends, but finds friendship fleeting and fragile.

When her father changes jobs and the family moves to a new town, she looks forward to a fresh start. She vows to be a better daughter and a happier person. She is crushed when she sees how difficult being "the new kid on the block" really is, although she admits she has probably treated new people with the same indifference which now faces her.

She returns to her hometown for the summer and is invited to a party thrown by one of the "popular" girls she has always admired. Her first drug encounter results from a party game. She doesn't know what she is getting into, but she craves acceptance by the group and doesn't ask. She has a pleasant experience and becomes increasingly more involved with different drugs. Sex becomes part of the experience, and she fears pregnancy. The reality of this fear makes her want to go home

---

Lynn Banta teaches English at Irving A. Robbins Junior High school in Farmington, CT.

to her parents, where she can be safe. The peer acceptance she wanted so desperately at first has turned into a source of pain and disgust.

Once home again, she is disappointed that her one new friend has returned from summer camp with a boyfriend and has no time for her. She befriends another girl and becomes actively involved in drugs again. When she realizes that she has become a pusher and that she is being used by a boyfriend to do this for him, she turns him in and runs away.

Escaping is an important theme in the book. Alice does not have the strength to face her problems. She always opts for escape, either through drugs or running away. Each experience serves only to make her more insecure and guilt-ridden.

She returns home after more drug involvement, vowing to stay straight. Although she stays drug-free for awhile, she is eventually drawn back to drugs. After she is caught by the police, Alice's parents monitor her actions closely. Once again, she runs away. The transient life lends itself easily to drugs, and she spirals downward another time.

During each period of drug involvement, the diary reflects her mixed feelings of ecstasy and despondency. Alice's vocabulary becomes vulgar and her personality undergoes great changes. She becomes hard and bitter towards society and everyone around her. When she is straight, she is shocked to read what she has written during her drug induced periods.

Frightened and disgusted by herself and her surroundings, Alice reaches out for her family. She goes home, amazed that her parents still love her and are willing to accept her again.

The second part of her diary begins at this point. She is determined to stay straight, and does so. This is an especially difficult accomplishment, as the "dopers" cannot accept her going straight, and the straight kids want nothing to do with her because of her past. Although she makes some friends and begins to feel more positive about herself, her daily existence turns into another kind of nightmare. The dopers begin to harass her and her family. She receives ultimatums to get involved again. They cannot accept her rejection of their lifestyle because this shows them that Alice has strength they do not. Finally, the dopers get to her. She is unknowingly fed acid, ends up in the hospital and, ultimately, an asylum. Ironically, both her first and last drug experiences occur without her knowledge.

She returns home for the last time. Alice decides she is now strong enough to give the diary up. She realizes that being

able to cope with her problems more openly is a sign of maturity. She feels that with the help of her straight friends she will be able to make it.

Three weeks after her final diary entry, Alice is found dead in her room. Whether the overdose was intentional, no one will ever know. She was one of the thousands of drug-related deaths that year.

If Alice's profanity alone is examined in this book, it is an obvious target for censorship. Upon reflection, however, the book's lesson is that drugs bring only confusion and heartache into the life of the user. The drug user's life, like Alice's words, deteriorates unbearably.

Alice faces pressures that are common in today's society. Adolescence is a vulnerable age. Peer pressure becomes more important than parents' wishes. Profanity is often used as a sign of rebellion. With the onset of puberty, sexual stirrings begin. The temptation of drugs and alcohol is more prevalent. This book deals with all of these subjects in a manner which enables the reader to see clearly that drugs are not a solution to the pressures. They only make things worse.

A positive theme that runs through the book is Alice's love for her family. She has normal feelings of aggravation at her parents' interference in, and objections to, her lifestyle, but she realizes that they love her very much. She is constantly surprised that her parents continue to love and support her, even when she cannot love herself. It is important to let adolescents know that their parents have faith in them. Family unity can strengthen the confused child.

An especially touching love is that displayed by Alice for her grandparents. She wants them to be proud of her, and tries to gain their approval. This is an admirable quality in Alice, one which reinforces the reader's opinion that she is a loving, generous girl.

An issue which originates in Alice's thoughts about her grandparents is death. She is concerned that the worms and maggots will invade her grandfather's body once he is buried. She has the same concerns when her grandmother dies, and later is obsessed with the thought of maggots, worms, and flies eating her alive. Adolescence is an age where thoughts of life and death present themselves to people in a more real sense. It is important that kids get an opportunity to talk about the fears associated with death. By talking about Alice's fears, they come to terms with their own.

Alice does engage in sex, but only under the influence of drugs. She wonders what straight sex would be like and expresses the hope that someday she will be able to get married and then make love as she feels it should be. She does not feel that what she has experienced is healthy. There are no graphic sexual descriptions in the diary, only allusions to the act. Since this is another issue weighing heavily on teeangers' minds, it needs to be dealt with under a teacher's professional guidance. This book provides that opportunity.

Peer pressure is a dominant theme in the book. Much of what Alice gets involved with is initiated by her need for acceptance. Teenagers are, often unknowingly, quite cruel to each other. Kids who are quite pleasant individually become monsters in groups. Adolescents need to be made aware of the consequences of their actions. They should try to be as careful with each other's emotions as possible. Forced rituals as a form of acceptance can prove very damaging.

Adolescence is a time of wondering, doubting, and learning. It is a vulnerable period in a person's life. The issues presented in this book will be dealt with by teeangers, whether it is sanctiioned by their parents or not. There are no facets of Go Ask Alice which are unknown to adolescents.

In a positive, guided setting these problems can be dealt with in a way which will make the teen more aware of the dangers of drugs. Perhaps as teachers we can help educate students and dispel some of their fears of loneliness. Perhaps we can even give them someone to talk to before it is too late--as it was for Alice.

If parents strenuously object to their children reading Go Ask Alice, there are alternatives for those students. One possibility could be to research and write a paper about the dangers of drugs. Another could be to read several non-fiction articles presenting the dangers of drugs, and to report findings to the class. These suggestions could also be done in conjunction with the book, strengthening its impact.

REVIEWS

Books for You, 1982, p. 199.

In 1978, four major publishers of literature anthologies dropped Shirley Jackson's award-winning 1949 short story classic, "The Lottery," from their national editions. A publishing official explained: "If the books contained the story, they wouldn't have been bought in Texas."

Barbara Parker and Stefanie Weiss (see Bibliography), p. 27.

The Pigman by Paul Zindel

Joan Venditto

The Horn Book Magazine (February, 1969) says of Paul Zindel's The Pigman: "Few books that have been written for young people are as cruelly truthful about the human condition." Its cruel truthfulness is the distinctive feature most likely to move adults to criticize this book narrated by adolescent characters for young adolescent readers.

In The Pigman John Conlan and Lorraine Jensen, both fifteen years old and living in New York, set out to "record the facts, and only the facts about our experiences with Mr. Angelo Pignati (p.5).[1] What begins as a prank--a telephone call to a stranger--develops into anunusual relationship between a sixty-year-old man and two teenagers, a relationship that ends with the finality of death. Unhappy with their inability to communicate with adults at home and in school, John and Lorraine are intrigued by this strange Mr. Pignati who accepts them into the adult world of wine and conversation, yet shares in their childlike fun of roller skates, balloons, and trips to the zoo. But the two teenagers confuse the playmate with the play things, they drive Mr. Pignati beyond his capacity, and his heart breaks down. Actually, John and Lorraine witness their friend suffer two heart attacks, one purely physical and the second, final attack an emotional breaking of the human heart. The Pigman ends as it began, with its two teenaged narrators feeling responsible for the death of their funny old man.

Responsibility is only one of the novel's general themes; others are loneliness, the generation gap, maturity, and humaneness.

Adult critics may well frown on the image projected by an adolescent hero--of sorts--who refers to his mother and father as the Old Lady and the Bore, or a nurse who talks about her patient whom she wishes "would hurry up and croak because her husband has been getting a little too friendly lately (p. 120)". The adult critic may cringe at the thought of adolescent readers witnessing the buffoonery displayed by the title character, and at the raucous party staged by Mr. Pignati's trusted teenaged friends at his house on the occasion of his sickness. Yet these are the scenes which provide a basis for some deep soul-searching and values clarification on the part of today's adolescent readers.

Joan Venditto is English Department Chair of Daniel Hand High School in Madison, CT. Her rationale is reprinted from the NEATE Rationales (1970).

John and Lorraine do not ponder their relationships with their parents as they "record the facts and only the facts" of their experiences. However, the junior or senior high school teacher might profitably lead adolescent readers to question the nature of these relationships. Neither does Lorraine ever criticize her mother as a disappointing commentary on the nursing profession. Yet, a close look at Mrs. Jensen affords the reader an opportunity for some career education. Class discussion might move from consideration of the basic unhappiness of Mrs. Jensen as a wife to her lack of success as a mother to her apparent ineffectiveness as a nurse. As a result of such discussion, students should be able to list some necessary qualifications of a wife, a mother, and a nurse. Finally, students should be able to move from this exercise to a discussion, oral or written, of the effect of each of Mrs. Jensen's three roles upon the other, thus coming to grips with the complexity of the human psyche--something Lorraine often mentions but never ponders very seriously.

Another set of classroom activities might focus on Mr. Pignati's and John and Lorraine's mutual need for friendship. Adolescent readers might analyze what Mr. Pignati on the one hand, and John and Lorraine on the other hand, both give and receive from their friendship. Is the scale tipped toward giving or receiving? Such an exercise leads students to understand that friendships entail both giving and receiving. Closely allied to the concept of friendship is the concept of trust. Mr. Pignati entrusts John and Lorraine with his friendship, and they betray the friendship. In parallel action, the two teenagers trust their teenaged friends that the party at Mr. Pignati's will go well. Both Mr. Pignati and John and Lorraine base their trust on desperate loneliness, and the result is misplaced trust. Misplaced friendship and trust, the exile caused by loneliness--these themes are summarized in the last lines of the novel:

> Baboons.
> Baboons.
> They build their own cages...(p. 159)

Like the Cricket, the school librarian whose clothes fit snugly, the moral fiber of this novel fits snugly around the plot's narration. The Pigman is a novel of contemporary situations. Today's adolescent reader will savor--perhaps even recognize as familiar--the mother's snide references to deviant sex, the teeanger's clever--if malicious--imagination, the rollicking wine and beer parties. Today's teacher will use such appeal as a vehicle for initiating some thoughtful decision-making activities in which students analyze their own responsibilities toward others, their need to trust in others, and their opportunities to develop friendships based on mutual trust and responsibility.

---

[1]Paul Zindel, The Pigman (New York): Harper & Row, 1968). Published in paperback by Dell. Page references are to the Dell edition.

REVIEWS

Books for You, 1982, p. 213.

Horn Book 45:61, February, 1969.

Library Journal 93:4425, November 15, 1968.

Shakespeare for Censors

Of all base passions, fear is most accurs'd.
(King Henry IV, Part I, V, ii, 18)

True nobility is exempt from fear.
(King Henry VI, Part II, IV, i, 129)

Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind.
(King Henry VI, Part III, V, vi, 11)

We may pity, though not pardon thee.
(Comedy of Errors, I, i, 97)

He that is giddy thinks the world turns round.
(Taming of the Shrew, V, ii, 29)

He draweth out the thread of his verbosity
finer than the staple of his argument.
(Love's Labour's Lost, V, i, 18)

Thy head is as full of quarrels as an egg
is full of meat.
(Romeo and Juliet, III, i, 23)

But if you be afeard to hear the worst,
Then let the worst unheard fall on your head.
(King John, V, ii, 134)

Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!
(Hamlet, I, v, 182)

Hence, horrible shadow!
Unreal mockery, hence.
(Macbeth, III, iv, 106)

We are ready to try our fortunes
To the last man.
(King Henry IV, Part II, IV, ii, 43)

Strive mightily, but eat and drink as friends.
(Taming of the Shrew, I, ii, 281)

DPS

The Outsiders by S. E. Hinton

Barbara Leigh Laurain

In the spring of 1983, the television premier of "The Warriors", a movie about gang wars, stirred up national concern. So many irate phone calls were received at one Boston station that there was a last minute program change and a Katherine Hepburn movie was shown instead. Current research findings regarding T.V./movie violence and its effects on actual aggression have alerted the public to what seems to be a growing insensitivity in society to all kinds of violence and bloodshed. I think that one possible objection to the classroom use of The Outsiders is the underlying violence which leads to the death of three main characters and the harsh reality of the interaction between the in-group, the Socs, and the out-group, the Greasers. Indeed, the T.V. previews of the recently released movie version of The Outsiders emphasizes this very aspect of the novel: violence. However, teenagers know that the world is often harsh, cruel and violent. They realize that they must learn acceptable roles vital for survival. Teen-agers of today respond positively to this novel's directness and honesty.

The novel is narrated by a 14 year old, Ponyboy Curtis, a Greaser from the poor neighborhood. Marked by long, well-oiled hair and a reputation for toughness, the Greasers are harassed by the rival group, the affluent Socs (Socials). Ponyboy, although different from his friends in his enthusiasm for books and school, is fiercely loyal to his group. He admires his older brother Soda but resents and feels unloved by Darry, the oldest brother who has worked to keep the boys together since the death of their parents. The interaction between Darry and Ponyboy, later in the story, is a touching example of Hinton's compassionate understanding of a teen-ager's need to be loved.

The story begins at a drive-in one night where Ponyboy and Johnny, a quiet "mascot" of the Greaser gang, meet two Soc girls, Cherry and Marcia. Pony is surprised when Cherry and he are able to talk so easily and seriously. Hinton suggests that all teenagers, no matter what their background or homelife, share common concerns. At this point, however, Pony doesn't believe Cherry's insistence that Socs have troubles too.

Later the same night the two Greasers are attacked by a gang of Socs because of their friendliness to the two Soc girls. To save Pony from being drowned, Johnny stabs and kills a Soc. This

---

Barbara Leigh Laurain has taught grades 7, 8, 9 in both Massachusetts and Connecticut. She currently teaches in South Windsor and at the Milton Academy Summer Writing Institute, Milton, Massachusetts.

catapults the two boys into an adventurous four days of hiding out as fugitives in an abandoned church. Just when Johnny has decided to turn himself in, tragedy strikes. In a heroic attempt to save some children from the burning church, Johnny is fatally hurt. At the hospital, Ponybody, only slightly injured, is reunited with his brothers Darry and Soda. This moment, when Ponyboy realizes that Darry really does love him, is a sensitive scene which emphasizes the importance of family unity and love. These "tough," "macho" characters are unembarrassed about displaying true human emotions. "Darry didn't like me...He hollered at me all the time...Suddenly I realized, horrified, that Darry was crying."

As the plot continues, Johnny dies, there's a rumble between gangs, and there's a trial for Ponyboy. A clear and forceful message is conveyed to the teen-age reader: despite all life's hardships, there is still goodness in the world. Ponyboy's reactions to his harsh but maturing experiences help him and the reader recognize that admist the evil and inhumanity of humans to each other, there is still goodness, but sometimes one has to look for it. If Ponyboy quits looking at sunsets, he might never "see" them again; nevertheless, Johnny's letter to him not to become hardened to life's beauty encourages Ponyboy to rise above the turmoil.

For those Junior high school students who aren't "natural" readers or who don't like "made-up" stories, The Outsiders is an ideal book. Its exciting narrative and simple language quickly capture a reader's attention, but its mature reflection on serious issues ensures that the student will also have a significant reading experience. For many of those readers it is their first positive reading experience. To many it even changes their perceptions about themselves as non-readers.

However, this novel is not merely an enticement for reading. It offers stimulus for fruitful discussions based on the central themes of self-realization, maturation, and seeing people as individuals rather than as stereotyped group members. Today's teenagers are faced with adult problems. At 14, they recognize the tension that exists even in the "Socs'" game of dating in which status is so important and individuality is hidden beneath a cool exterior and membership in the clique. Underlying values in the novel reinforce those of society by pointing out that fighting accomplishes nothing; life is difficult for both rich and poor; friendship and love are valuable emotions; being an individual is more important that succumbing to peer pressure; and no matter how grim things might seem, one should never forget the "sunsets" or goodness in life.

From a literary aspect, the writing style is direct and honest. Ms. Hinton is adept at revealing a distinctive character with a few pertinent physical details and personal

mannerisms. Indeed, these concise sketches which Ponyboy gives of each of his friends could provide models for student's own writing assignments. Furthermore, the characters' dialogue and word choice is fresh and authentic. Ponyboy himself is alert to social distinctions of language; he defines certain terms that are peculiar to his gang. This again could provide a springboard for class discussion or writing assignments in which students use sketches from the novel as models. Certainly the general literary terms of plot, conflict, characterization, suspense, theme, foreshadowing and setting can become technical tools used in an analysis of the story.

In a more traditional mode, there are several books that touch upon similar themes. Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet and the more modern musical West Side Story deal with the tradition of feuds and depict the senselessness of fighting. Catcher in the Rye and A Separate Peace are contemporary novels which explore the predicaments of rich and poor adolescents. Finally, an abridged edition of Dickens' Great Expectations can be used to compare a traditional literary treatment of a reality of the past as seen through the eyes of Pip with Hinton's treatment of life in modern society as experienced by Ponyboy. However, The Outsiders, as a young adolescent novel, has a remarkable ability to show the grimmer side of adolescent life without ever sensationalizing and without losing sight of the positive value to be found in honesty, kindness and concern for others. Above all, this novel can move students from reluctance to excitement about reading and from apathy to concern about important issues in our society today.

REVIEWS

New York Times Book Review, May 7, 1967

Horn Book, August, 1967

Library Journal, May 15, 1967

Whenever there is an enforced orthodoxy--or even two orthodoxies, as often happens--good writing stops.

George Orwell, op cit, p. 67.

A Day No Pigs Would Die by Robert Newton Peck

Susan M. Metzler-Kirkman

Robert Newton Peck's first novel for young adults is a heart-warming, lovingly-crafted account of a twelve-year old boy: his passage to manhood, his reflections on life and death and his relationship with his father, a man rich though poor, wise though illiterate. The setting is rural Vermont at a time in America's history when thrift, hard work, respect for authority, mutual respect and neighborliness were important virtues.

Rob Peck grows to manhood in the five-season span of the novel. The rites-of-passage begin in the opening episode when Rob notices a neighbor's stray cow having difficulty giving birth. After removing his trousers, Rob ties one pant-leg to the neck of the half-born calf and the other leg to a nearby tree and pulls the calf out. Then, noticing the cow is choking, Rob reaches down her throat and yanks out a goiter, again saving the cow's life. Bruised and bloody, Rob passes out in the prickers. He has met a challenge, faced responsibility and won. To express appreciation, the neighbor gives Rob a pig. Pinky becomes Rob's treasured pet, a rare occurrence on a farm where the father must butcher pigs to pay off the mortgage. In the summer, these neighbors take Rob and Pinky to the Rutland Fair, a place his parents had never traveled to. (His view of the world broadens as he gains independence.) That winter, Rob learns his father is dying and he must take Papa's place on the farm. Then, Rob realizes that Pinky is barren and cannot be kept as a pet any longer. Rob assists his father and cries when the pig is slain.

> "Oh Papa. My heart's broke."
>
> "So is mine," said Papa, "but I'm thankful you're a man...That's what being a man is all about, boy. It's just doing what's got to be done."

The next spring, Papa dies. Rob arranges the funeral, digs the grave, dresses in his father's clothes, leads his mother and aunt to the grave, greets the mourners and conducts the service; his initiation is complete--he is a man.

Since 1972, when A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE was published, this novel has been requested by young adults and recommended by teachers and librarians. In a mid-1970s survey sent to

---

Susan M. Metzler-Kirkman, a former elementary school teacher, now teaches at Manchester Community College.

English teachers and librarians across the country, Peck's book was one of the top adolescent novels recommended.

At an appropriate reading level for most middle/junior high school students, this short, fast-moving, easily understandable novel should be taught for many reasons. First, it teaches the value of family life; a strong father-son relationship, an extended-family support system, a warm, loving environment in which to grow. It's about a vanished America--rural America in the 1920s--a time of traditional family life and roles, when life was rich and full without television and modern conveniences. Next, it's about another culture, the Shaker tradition, a simple life without frills, with Shaker law (a pig must never be bedded with a cow) and the Shaker way (being neighborly) as the guiding principles. Also, this novel is rich in symbolism: from the title (the day the father died), to the use of seasons, to names (the town, "Learning" and the father, "Haven").

As part of a thematic unit, A DAY... could be incorporated into a "rites of-passage" unit with SUMMER OF MY GERMAN SOLDIER by Bett Greene, I WILL GO BAREFOOT ALL SUMMER FOR YOU by Katie Letcher Lyle, THE CAY by Theodore Taylor, IF I LOVE YOU, AM I TRAPPED FOREVER? by M.E. Kerr and JULIE OF THE WOLVES by Jean Craighead George. It could also be used in a "death and dying" unit. Not only does it deal with the father's death with dignity, and the killing of Pinky, it also has episodes about the death and proper burial of an illegitimate child and the useful and useless killing of animals (killing hens, frogs and pigs for food versus "weaseling" a dog--putting it in a closed barrel with a weasel so it becomes a good weasel-hunting dog). This novel could be used in conjunction with DEATH BE NOT PROUD by John Gunther, ADMISSION TO THE FEAST by Gunnel Beckmann, I HEARD THE OWL CALL MY NAME by Margaret Craven, WHERE THE LILIES BLOOM by Vera and Bill Cleaver and A BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA by Catherine Paterson.

The reviews speak for themselves..."The clear, understated style, the father's innate gentleness and sensitivity to his son's pain and the unpolluted environment make this a most appealing novel" (Hurt, LIBRARY JOURNAL). "It is sentiment without sentimentality--no easy feat--and it is an honest, unpretentious book" (NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW). "This profoundly affecting memoir-novel of life on a Vermont Shaker farm in the 1920s draws from several literary traditions." (Coyne, NATIONAL REVIEW).

In terms students can understand, using words they can read, A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE shows that even the harshest life can be lived with honor and can end in dignity.

REVIEWS

Cooper, Arthur. NEWSWEEK, 81, March 12, 1973, p. 98.

Coyne, P.S. NATIONAL REVIEW, 25, July 20, 1973, p. 800.

Hurt, Terri. LIBRARY JOURNAL, 98, March 15, 1973, p. 1022.

Petrow, Marian. LIBRARY JOURNAL, 97, November 15, 1972, p. 3728.

____. NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, May 13, 1973, p. 37.

Brave New School

Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta
When censors come
I run for shelter.

Burn the books? Oh, what the heck!
I don't need 'em;
I've got my check.

DPS

Well, I lost the fifty thousand readers--and the money from the sale. I kept my integrity, if that is what one keeps from pleading the First over some lightweight pre-adolescent dialogue. I certainly learned, if I did not know it before, not to underestimate the influence of potential community protest on publishers who sell books to schools.

Betty Miles, "Some Thoughts..."

"The community is very conservative in nature. Its effect on the school system is twofold. 1) A vigilante squad which closely watches books, subject matter, methods, etc. 2) Intimidates the school district to such a degree that literature of a controversial nature is not taught because of the visible hassels involved, and the invisible ones only hinted at."

-Jr. High School Teacher-Suburban

Ohio teacher's comments. Quoted in J. Christopher Davis & James E. Davis, "Censorship in Ohio Schools...," Athens, OH, 1981.

Using Best Sellers

Christine Sullivan

Whenever teachers prepare a curriculum, they try to be specific. So, specifically, what are "best sellers"? Most current best seller lists are compiled from sales figures received from retail booksellers. Of the twenty-five fiction books each year which have achieved best seller status recently, each has had sales of over 100,000 copies. Of nonfiction books designated best sellers each has sold over 200,000 copies. Thus, the identification of a best seller is arbitrary and is based on its popularity with the buying public. Standards are commercial and popular, without reference to educational values. However, these popular votes at cash registers of bookstores have an impact on an educationally sound selection process.

School is supposed to prepare students for a fulfilling, independent adulthood. To that end, educators must help students to develop specific skills in various disciplines that will serve them throughout life. The Essentials of English (NCTE, 1979) states that "Because thinking and language are clearly linked, teachers of English have always held that one of their main duties is to teach students how to think." The tools which teachers use to accomplish this goal are selected with professional judgment. Particularly in the area of selecting materials for literary study, teachers of English concern themselves with both recognition and appreciation of literary techniques and styles and with the development of independent, critical thinking skills of students. Especially with older students, those about to leave school, teachers of English can use selected best sellers in a classroom setting to develop critical and creative thinking abilities, practiced on popular, available modern materials.

Popular best sellers have an immediacy to them: they are written in this age and reflect concerns of this time. In many instances, that "presentness" raises questions of their suitability for the classroom. While it is true that current popular best sellers lack the aura of acceptability invested by age, their reflection of present times can be a benefit, rather than a hindrance to their use by students--who also are of this age, this time. Louise Rosenblatt in Literature As Exploration (3rd Edition, Noble & Noble Publishers, Inc., 1965, p. 7) speaks to this human response to literature:

Christine Sullivan teaches English, History and Social Studies at Plainville High School. She also serves on the Executive Board of C.C.T.E. as Chair for the Profession. She has spoken on censorship to various groups, including the annual conventions of the Connecticut Library Association and C.C.T.E.

> Certainly to the great majority of readers, the human experience that literature presents is primary. For them the formal elements of the work--style and structure, rhythmic flow--function only as a part of the total literary experience. The reader seeks to participate in another's vision--to reap knowledge of the world, to fathom the resources of the human spirit, to gain insights that will make his own life more comprehensible.

It is this personal involvement in a literary work that marks the accomplished reader. Reading of this type, on this level, is consistent with the teaching of critical thinking; "to differentiate between subjective and objective viewpoints...to evaluate the intentions and messages of speakers and writers" (Essentials of English). This discrimination can be and should be taught, too, for it leads to an evaluative ability which can serve its possessor a lifetime. Students' personal involvement in books is increased by books with modern settings, present day characters and current conflicts. This personal investment in a book also allows a reader vicarious experience. Rather than having to experience first hand, sometimes with pain, a variety of human conflicts, a reader of modern works can read about modern men and women and can judge, from the safer distance of the book's pages, how such human behavior relates to him. Modern challenges faced by modern-day characters, as portrayed in popular best sellers, can aid in this relatively penalty-free process of exploration.

Teachers of literature often discuss structural and contextual aspects of written material--the symbolism used, the characterization, plot, conflict, theme--and use selected works to illustrate these concepts. Authors, all authors, rely on some or all of these elements to carry their messages to the reader. Communication is uppermost, and various literary techniques effect that author-reader exchange. An author of a best seller clearly has communicated with a large number of people, who voluntarily involve themselves in that author's attempt at conveying his ideas. By using best sellers in the classroom, educators can guide developing readers to explore important writers of today, to identify and evaluate literary techniques in modern writing, and to acquire personal standards of discernment applicable to independent, lifelong reading habits.

But are best sellers good enough? Are they good literature? The classics, for many, qualify as "good" literature by virtue of their longevity, their intrinsic value, their proven worth. A best seller achieves its status based on the decision of an amorphous public and lacks that validation of time. Yet the reasons the classics are studied are similar to the reasons best sellers can be studied: they reveal specific

aspects of man in their time period; they reveal some general truth about human nature; their authors' uses of literary techniques are skilled, interesting, and appropriate; and many people share an interest in those books.

Literary standards are, of course, not so simple. Great literature "lasts." Will a particular best seller "last"? Best sellers are, by definition, "popular" and subject to the buying vagarities of the buying public. Last year's best seller may be this year's dust collector. On the other hand, a current best seller may have significant value for many years. The point is not their lasting power, but their immediate impact, that impact which has found a common response among so many people. The reason for that response, the ideas communicated about people to those people, is the subject for exploration in the classroom.

Can best sellers develop "taste"? Good literature develops "taste"--the ability to identify and appreciate well-written literary works which make significant contributions to man's esthetic and philosophic knowledge--thus, "good" literature. That terribly unspecific, highly pedagogical description is symptomatic of the main issue, i.e. "What is good literature?" Definitions vary, standards change. Taste, appreciation of "good" anything, is difficult to identify, changes with culture and time, and, because of that, is a problematic area to address in teaching. As Arthur Appletree said in a study of the teaching of English as quoted in the April 1983, issue of the English Journal:

> The stress on taste is antithetical to the underlying goals of instruction. The way to build taste...is to open new vistas rather than shut off old ones.

Using popular best sellers opens students to current authors, depicting current concerns. This addition to (not substitution for) literature allows opportunities for diverse exploration of the current vistas of human behavior as reflected in its literature.

A final question concerning best sellers centers on how wide the classroom's vistas should be opened for young people in school. Professional standards of selection must apply when choosing all books for students, and these professional standards must apply when selecting best sellers for study. Firm, well-considered, educational reasons designed to fulfill curriculum goals must determine selection from among the eligible books. A best seller, like any book under consideration, should increase students' access to ideas and information in a way that is suitable to those students' ages and circumstances. The best seller should be reviewed for consideration as a

whole, with evaluations based on whether all aspects of the book work together integrally to develop character or theme. Some best sellers may not be suitable for classroom use. On the other hand, many best sellers aid valid curriculum goals and help young people to acquire mature reading skills, to develop discrimination, and to confront modern challenges in an atmosphere of discussion and exploration.

SOURCES FOR REVIEWS OF BEST SELLERS

New York Times, Book Section

Book Review Digest

New York Review of Books

Let us cast aside the pretense of neutrality. Let us acknowledge God as Supreme Person, active in human affairs through a vital faith in His Son the Perfect Lord and Teacher. Let us on this foundation rebuild an education system that alone can lift man to the heights that his spirit within longs to achieve. This is the history of the beginning of our nation, and it can again be the reality in our Land.

And to those who say, "But what about other religions and their ideas about God?" Let me respond. The Judao-Christian Faith has always triumphed in the free market of world religions. Be assured it can stand any comers here and now, and it will still overcome!

Rev. William Roy Bulkley, Connecticut Citizens for Constitutional Education, in "What Are the Cultural Values Transmitted by the State School?" (1983).

Defending Adolescent Literature: A Classic Confrontation

Richard H. Gray

Consider the following comments made about adolescent literature:

"After all, it really isn't what we consider good literature...is it?"

or

"Well, I suppose it's OK...for some of our slower students."

Unfortunately, these comments are all too typical of the criticism leveled at young adult literature. What is perhaps more disturbing is that these remarks were not made by a school principal, or a member of a local board of education, or even part of yet another national report lamenting the lack of excellence in public education. They were made by English teachers during an informal, after school faculty lounge debate about what kids are or are not reading today. What was the reaction of other English teachers present? Embarrassed and uncomfortable looks were exchanged, feet were shuffled, and watches were glanced at. No one, including me, seemed to be able to respond to those unsubstantiated indictments of adolescent literature. No one sprang to its defense.

I knew several people in the group did, in fact, use various young adult novels in their classrooms, and I also knew that they shared my feelings about the importance of exposing students to this particular literary genre. So, why the silence? Were we too tired at the end of a long day to fight another battle justifying what we teach? Did we feel too vulnerable attempting to defend adolescent novels when compared to the so-called classics? Maybe we just didn't care?

I prefer to believe that we didn't reply because we were caught without our thoughts fully formulated and our terms clearly defined. We have all had the experience of listening to a critical comment, a snide remark, or an outright verbal attack without responding to it effectively. There doesn't seem to be anything to say or do at the moment that seems appropriate to put our critics in their places. Oh, we may mutter a half-hearted, "Oh, yeah!" or some other equally clever comeback, but we feel hollow and ill at ease with our own silence and seeming lack of conviction and fervor. Later on that day, or in my case, driving home that evening, we come up with the perfect arguments that will not only

---

Richard Gray, CCTE President-Elect, teaches English at Enfield High School in Enfield, CT.

thwart and frustrate our adversaries, but will also persuade them to share our point of view.

Those of us who advocate and teach adolescent literature in our classrooms have come to our conclusions and justifications through an intuitive, subjective process many good teachers rely on to determine what they teach, how they teach, and why they teach. Here I am concerned with the why. We know we are right, and we take our ideas for granted and assume our colleagues share our enthusiasm. But merely knowing isn't good enough to convince the skeptics; they must be won over with a clearly presented rationale. There is no one neat argument for teaching and exposing students to adolescent literature, but there are a number of reasons why it can and should be used in our classrooms.

Some of the confusion about adolescent literature may stem from people not knowing exactly what it is. G. Robert Carlsen, author of Books and the Teen Age Reader, has defined adolescent literature as, "The literature that adolescents read." On the other hand, some librarians and book reviewers maintain that adolescent literature is any book published by the juvenile department rather than the trade division of a publisher. Even well known authors of young adult literature are not convinced that what they write is adolescent literature! Ken Donelson, co-author of Literature for Today's Young Adult, reports that Robert Cormier's first reaction to being classified as a young adult author was one of shock. His dismay was said to be followed by a period of writer's block. Anyone who has heard Cormier speak recently on his designation, knows that he is now very comfortable with the label of young adult author. However broad the definitions may be, I feel we can say adolescent literature roughly includes the 11-16 year old reader--a group with which we, as teachers, are vitally concerned.

If we agree that one of our primary goals as teachers is to instill a joy in reading in our students, then adolescent literature is an appropriate and fruitful avenue to explore. Just as adult readers do not feel compelled to plow through a best seller to its conclusion if they do not like the first few chapters, young readers will equally quickly turn off a classic book even though they have been told by their teacher that they should read it because it is "good for them." Oh, they may grudgingly tolerate the class discussions and may, in fact, read the words, but they will not get emotionally involved in the book and will certainly not enjoy it. There is the added danger that they will add to the increasing number of aliterates--those who can read but choose not to.

I recently checked out a copy of Silas Marner from our school library; except for a presumed occasional dusting, the last time it had left the bookshelf was October of 1978! Yet, in the distant

corner of the same library, the paperback book section, made up entirely of young adult novels from Seventeenth Summer by Maureen Daly to Robert Lipsyte's One Fat Summer, experiences a constant turn over. Just on circulation statistics alone, the librarian can tell you what the kids are reading and enjoying.

This is not to diminish the importance of reading and studying the classics, or as one of my students says, "the good stuff." It does illustrate, however, that in order to get students to read more and to enjoy the process of reading, they must be given increased opportunities to read and discuss books that involve both their lives and their experiences. During pre-teen and teen-age years, peer relationships many times become the most important aspect of the adolescent's life, frequently surpassing the influence of family. Young adult literature often helps teen-agers through this difficult period by allowing them to read about others their same age with similar problems, life situations, and backgrounds. In this respect, adolescent literature has a socially therapeutic effect on the reader. It is always reassuring to realize, "Hey, I'm not the only one who is lonely and confused." Although it certainly will not solve these overwhelming problems for a young adult reader, adolescent literature can help them realize that other people, although fictional, are experiencing the same feelings.

Some of us may fear that reading a steady diet of young adult novels will stunt students' intellectual growth. Yet, adolescents, like adults, choose books by the subject or focus of interest in a book. They will read difficult books on topics they are interested in and will reject easy books on subjects they don't like. Additionally, students will make a natural transition from a book like April Morning by Howard Fast to Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage. They will not continue to gorge themselves on books that once held their interest but are no longer challenging.

"But," you may ask, "aren't the plots of young adult novels too thin and the characters too shallow to teach in an English class? After you have discussed plot, setting, and basic conflicts, what's left?" Again, there is a wide range of sophistication in the young adult novel. Yes, some are predictable, trite, and narrow, but others, like Cormier's The Chocolate War and I Am the Cheese, are as stylistically complex and thought provoking as the tried and true classics. Also, the young adult novel has the added advantage of speaking directly to adolescent readers. What our young readers want is an honest view of the adolescent world from the adolescent's point of view. Today's teen-age novels deal realistically with the problems of today's society including such diverse and controversial topics as homosexuality, rape, alcoholism, drug abuse, obesity, anorexia, and divorce. It is also true that many of the classics and the "old adult" novels (as Robert Lipsyte calls them) deal with the same problems, but they seem to

communicate on a level that adolescents find difficult to understand.

Robert Small, a noted authority on young adult literature, feels that the adolescent novel is an ideal starting point for students making a transition to more sophisticated literary observations. He cites research that indicates students' awareness and facility with literary analysis is enhanced by a knowledge of similar literary styles and techniques present in adolescent literature.

If we as English teachers wish to promote and instill a love of reading and its attendant joys in our students, we must motivate them with meaningful, readable books with which they can identify. In advocating the use of adolescent literature in the schools, Donald Gallo, former editor of the Connecticut English Journal, presents an effective and succinct rationale with which to conclude this article.

> I'm not about to suggest we throw out the classics and indiscriminately substitute high-interest, easy-reading YA books. There are too many significant books in our past that students might benefit from. But benefit from is the key. If students do not benefit from readings we assign or if they are turned off of reading any books because of the way we treat reading in our classrooms, then what have we gained from insisting on better books?

I can only write well about one world, the world I know, the people I grew up with, the people I am living among now. I don't pretend that these people are normal or typical, whatever that is...To me the best realistic fiction shows life as it is. Naturally there aren't two of us in this world who see life exactly the same way. But if any of you ever sit down to write a work of realistic fiction, I would hope, for my sake as a reader, that you would write of life exactly as it has appeared to you--all your truest thoughts and feelings and ideas--not just the cheerful surface most of us put on when we go about our daily routine, but the darker side as well: the terrors, the uncertainties, the confusions.

Norma Klein, "Some Thoughts..."

Selecting Textbooks for Classroom Instruction

Sherry Loring Winslow

What should be the criteria?

Who should make the decisions?

Whose judgments and values should govern selection of material for public schools in a pluralistic society?

Because of censorship pressure and societal changes, questions such as these are assuming a new importance. My regional high school for several small towns in a northwestern section of Connecticut has decided that it can best serve its students, in this volatile area of book selection, by establishing a rather formal selection procedure. This systematic approach seems to help the school to be sensitive and responsive to its own communities and to academic freedom.

The board, administrators and teachers agree with the ideas expressed in the State Board of Education's policy adopted in 1981 on academic freedom. The school wants to avoid being provincial; it wants its choices to respect the pluralistic nature of this country. To help with the problem of what text-selection criteria should be used to meet these goals, the school starts with a checklist. The superintendent and the textbook selection committee developed this list after studying similar guides used by other schools. Procedures for Textbook and Instructional Materials Selection published by Educational Research Service, Inc. of Arlington, Virginia, is one source which provides copies of textbook criteria used throughout the country. Northwestern Regional's list of twenty-seven guides includes items such as those concerning:

the scholarship of the text--"Is the content accurate and in agreement with the latest research available?"

treatment of sensitive areas--"Have stereotypes been avoided in terms of race, religion, ethnicity, and sex?"

The teacher and the department chairman who are suggesting a text evaluate the book carefully and complete the checklist before meeting with the textbook selection committee. The teacher, department chairman and committee discuss the text and

---

Sherry Loring Winslow teaches English and is chairman of the English Department at Northwestern Regional School of Regional School District No. 7. The school serves the towns of Barkhamsted, Colebrook, New Hartford, and Norfolk, CT.

apply the checklist criteria together. The department chairman presents to the committee a statement concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the text or, in cases involving fiction, a rationale. The permanent members of the committee, a reading teacher (who determines the reading level of each selection), an administrator, another teacher and the media director, are joined by teachers and department chairmen who are attending the meeting to present texts for consideration. This group becomes the working committee. All members examine the text. They respect the expertise of the teacher and department chairman involved but they feel free to question, to ascertain that each listed criterion has been carefully applied and that a responsible selection has been made. The committee sends a copy of the statement of strengths and weaknesses or the rationale, and documentation of the committee's action to the principal along with the suggested text. The principal, having the assurance that the selection has been given thorough study becomes the spokesman for the book at a meeting of the board of education. He presents the statement and documentation to the board. After studying the text and the statement for two meetings, the boards votes on the selection.

At first the addition of a committee and the use of a prepared checklist appeared, to some of the involved staff, to be threatening and cumbersome. In practice, the procedure is proving to be supportive to everyone concerned. Those who have expertise in the specific subject area and who are most directly concerned make the initial selection. A rather large group becomes knowledgeable concerning the strengths and weaknesses of any given text and participates in its selection. The procedure, rather than being threatening, is creating a certain camaraderie. The committee work makes it possible, for instance, for math teachers to know about a new Spanish book, for English teachers to know about a new graphic arts book. By following the steps of this procedure selections are made which seem unbiased and reflective of a pluralistic society.

Some parents, groups and individuals, have concerns which render selections made with the multiplicity of society in mind not acceptable. The school respects the opinions of such groups. Some of the students within the school's population are members of a religious community which prefers that certain topics of instruction, sections of textbooks and specific novels not be included for its members. The department chairman involved works with a representative of the religious community to develop alternative work if possible. Curriculum guides for elective courses are made available to the leaders of the religious community so that some difficulties can be solved through course selection. In other cases non-participation or alternate novels are the options selected.

The school is sensitive also to individual objections. If a parent prefers that his or her child not study a certain topic

or book, the school without depriving other students of their academic freedom defers to that parent's wishes for the child. Another solution which is used particularly with novels is that of choice. Two or three novels are studied, simultaneously, by groups within the class. This technique builds in the opportunity for the student to participate in class without reading a particular novel to which the parent objects.

Book selection, this vital aspect of education, requires continual attention. Probably no one set plan can be accepted as permanent or infallible, but a rational system and considerate flexibility can aid a school in its effort to maintain academic freedom.

Teaching Challenged Books in a Psychiatric School Setting

Phyllis M. Knight

Through the ages, very little that has been written has been fortunate enough to escape becoming the center of a swirl of controversy. Someone, somewhere, at some time has taken offense at some aspect of the work: language, attitude, topic.

Through the years, then, English teachers have had to battle with doubt and indecision as they engaged in the excruciating process of selecting works of literature for consideration in their classes. The diligent search for the "non-controversial" has most often proved to be futile; the wrath of the CENSOR (official or unofficial) has been kindled, whatever the ultimate selection. The advent of "Adolescent Literature" in recent decades has made teaching even less easy for the harried English teacher; every book to appear in the course of study is equally capable of--and likely to--arouse a strident chorus of criticism and objection from sources outside the class.

It would seem logical that the common curriculum problems of the high school English teacher would be magnified and compounded when the literature class is in a high school located in a private psychiatric hospital. After all, it can be reasoned:

1) How can emotionally disturbed students from horrendous family backgrounds be anything but more disturbed on reading The Glass Menagerie or Long Day's Journey into Night?

2) How can students who are currently participating in an essentially self-centured therapy regimen, whose problems may perhaps include relationships with older people, respond in a positive fashion to The Pigman or A Day No Pigs Would Die?

3) How can students struggling to overcome personal drug-related problems be helped by reading Go Ask Alice or I Never Loved Your Mind?

4) How can students whose past may include seriously violent activity profit by books such as The Catcher in the Rye or A Separate Peace?

The answer to questions such as these lies in the assumption and recognition that:

Since 1968 Phyllis M. Knight has been teaching English students in the high school of the Institute of Living, a private psychiatric hospital.

> The study of English includes knowledge of the language itself, development of its use as a basic means of communication, and appreciation of its artistry as expressed in literature. "Essentials of English" (NCTE, 1982)

The student is in the classroom reading, questioning, explaining, appraising, and reasoning; he is engaged in the process of appreciating the work of literature as a reflection of the situations of life and criticizing the manner in which the author attempts to convey his message and achieve his ends. The primary role of the teacher in this process is to prompt and encourage the student to formulate questions; to develop and refine a sense of literary discrimination; to evaluate literary works objectively; and to establish and defend the criteria he establishes in order to form sound judgments. Ideally, exposure to and study of various types of literature will spur the student to think--creatively, logically, and critically.

These needs and goals exist for every student of English--whatever his educational milieu. They are not exclusively appropriate for students classified by society as "normal".

The Censor's Proverbs

We must all ban together--but we can also ban separately.

A word to the wise is too much.

When in doubt, cut it out.

A book in the fire is worth ten on the shelf.

Better dead than read.

A school and its books are best parted.

Books are the curse of the English class.

Never ban tomorrow what you can burn today.

DPS

Challenged Books in England

Paul Cervoni

Have you ever wondered how our British English teaching colleagues select books for class study? Do they teach any of the books reviewed in this issue of the Connecticut English Journal? Do they ever encounter censorship problems? Yes is the answer to the first two questions, and rarely, the answer to the third. This information is based on my own teaching experience in a British secondary school, and on recent informal conversations with three British teachers of English, all of them department heads. Anthony Daniels chairs the Department of English at John Willmott School in Sutton, Coldfield, West Midlands; Jean Haslam Hemingway has recently chaired the Department of English at Skipton Girl's School (secondary) in Skipton, Lancashire; Jill McAleese heads the Department of English in a large Staffordshire comprehensive high school. Our discussion centered on secondary schools, grades seven through twelve.

A variety of books is available across the six secondary school years; however, students who have opted to take "O" Level (tenth grade), "A" Level (eleventh and twelfth grades) and other government-administered examinations leading to a variety of educational certificates are required to read specific books set for the examination. Within each genre of study, however, the teacher is permitted to choose one from among two or three titles. Book choices for these grades are obviously limited to those set by the examining boards. The widest choices can be made in the seventh through ninth grades, where small sets of books, a blend of traditional and contemporary titles, stand ready for class reading and discussion.

What precepts do teachers and department heads apply to their choices? First, the book must be of sufficient language level so the student can read it. Second, the story must be a good one, well-written and interesting. Third, the book should mirror life, give insights into human nature and lead to useful discussions about real life. It should show commonalities as well as differences between cultures. Fourth, if the book features young people and carries a strong young person influence, it is highly recommended.

Quite a few of the books reviewed in this CEJ accord with British precepts and are currently studied in England. The Catcher in the Rye is very popular at every age level from fifteen

---

Paul Cervoni teaches English and Drama at Trumbull, Connecticut, High School. As a Fulbright Exchange teacher he taught English for one year at John Willmott School in Sutton, Coldfield, England.

up to university. It appeals to the non-literary minded students because it paints a brilliant portrait of teen-age thinking. It is widely used in classes of students who have failed their sixth form (senior year) exams and have returned to school for an additional year, and it is usually very successful because these older students have gone through experiences similar to those in the book. The Catcher in the Rye is considered fairly challenging literature.

Another popular book, one widely set at "O" Level (tenth grade final exam; taken for admission to eleventh and twelfth grade pre-college studies) is To Kill a Mockingbird. It is usually not read below the fifteen year old level. It leads to good class discussions because it considers children and young people fundamentally. Most students like it because it is readable. For this reason, it is particularly accessible to low ability students. In addition, it fits into a category of book that is very difficult to fill. Recently, the prestigious (London) Times Educational Supplement challenged the book, claiming not only that it was a fairy story which didn't tell the whole truth, but also that it misused a child's point of view to tell a disturbed and incomplete story. No one I spoke with agreed with this claim.

Some surprises emerged in a discussion of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Frequently taught in lower classes (not on the "O" Level), it is usually chosen because it features children. It is neither "soppy" nor violent and undesirable. It is a good follow-up to Tom Sawyer. Since it has no sexual interest or romance, no one objects to it!

Usually read for "A" Levels (Sixth form pre-university,) The Grapes of Wrath is a very popular book with British students, particularly because they are interested in the American Dust Bowl Depression Years. Despite a number of lessons spent on the censorship history of the novel, my own Sixth Form class failed to comprehend why anything in the book could be objectionable to some people.

Among other books mentioned in the pages of this journal, Animal Farm, Of Mice and Men and 1984 were cited as favorites. One person mentioned that The Scarlet Letter was difficult to treat in school due to the adultery. The public might get a false impression of the book, she said. Another teacher pointed out that The Chocolate War is now a set book for the sixteen plus exams (an amalgamation of the Certificate of Secondary Education and "O" Level exams.) The novels of Paul Zindel, he said, were now widely available in the school libraries. Catch 22, he continued, would be a set book at "A" Level as of September, 1983. Although The Pearl, The Old Man and the Sea, The Red Badge of Courage, The Call of the Wild, Shane and The Red Pony were not on our list of

reviewed books, he wanted to point out that he had enjoyed teaching them.

Do British teachers ever encounter censorship problems? Rarely. Most said it should be no surprise that England has little or no history of book challenges, since objecting to most books is tantamount to objecting to the examining board choices. To substitute the challenged book with another title essentially removes the student from most chances of success on the examination. Additionally, however, our British colleagues pointed out that parent involvement in the minutiae of curricula is quite rare. One said that parents very seldom check on school assignments read at home, although parent involvement is increasing. The general public, she said, seldom responds. No one could understand the magnitude of current censorship problems in the States, particularly in the light of American TV shows exported to an adoring British public.

Homosexuality plays only a minor part in *Quintin's Man,* and in England this has caused no problems, apart from the reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* complaining about so-called gay propaganda. The American edition, however, published by Elsevier/Nelson, has been ruthlessly edited. All references to homosexuality have been removed, and the two gay characters--young men of twenty who have been lovers for some time, in a stable, caring relationship--are made to seem just good friends and heterosexual. This makes complete nonsense of the story, and I'm quite glad to learn that it has not sold well at all in the States. (It sold very well in England, and at one time it was said to be one of the four most popular teenage novels borrowed from libraries.) I protested vigorously to the American publishers when I discovered what had been done, but it was by then too late to do anything about it.

David Rees, "Some Thoughts..."

PAPERBACK REVIEWS

PAPERBACK REVIEWS: A PREFACE

Don Gallo, while editor of CEJ's paperback reviews, chose to publish reviews of only young adult fiction because, unlike other literature, young adult fiction is not widely reviewed. As the new paperback review editor, I have chosen to maintain Don's practice of printing reviews of only young adult fiction; however, I have asked each reviewer, whenever possible, to recommend other fiction, either new or classic, which might be taught with the young adult novel as part of a unit. Many of the following reviews do spotlight exciting new young adult novels and remind teachers of other fiction which might be taught in conjunction. Other reviews, of books which are not highly recommended, provide a valuable service of a different kind: they caution teachers regarding novels that may be considered by some to be controversial, poorly written or limited in audience appeal. For your convenience in locating a particular review, all reviews have been arranged in alphabetical order by title.

I appreciate the time and effort of the reviewers, who forfeited part of their summer vacation in order to evaluate the latest young adult fiction. I also appreciate the cooperation of Dell, Avon, Bantam, Fawcett and New American Library, each of whom provided complimentary paperbacks for review. Finally, I am indebted to Don Gallo for all his assistance in my first experience as paperback review editor.

I hope that you will find the reviews useful in guiding the reading of your students.

Nancy Carriuolo

Nancy Carriuolo
Paperback Review Editor/
Associate Editor

Coming Back Alive by **Dennis J. Reader**
Avon Flare, 1983. 253 pp. $2.25

In a fast paced, articulate style, Coming Back Alive tells the story of two teenage runaways, Dylan and Bridget, close friends since third grade, who have escaped emotional and psychological pains in their lives by roughing it in the high mountains of California. They tackle the basics of wilderness survival by hunting for berries and nuts, fishing, catching small game and even killing a deer by devising their own trap and then using a knife to slaughter it. They not only find serenity and beauty in their hand carved mountain shelter but also grow up in their struggle to survive. They must face themselves as well as the mountains and confront the fact that they cannot escape their essential humanity, though they have become more like mountain men. Can they return to Santa Barbara and accept the real world again? Dylan says he can't, but Bridget says she can, so finally they part their ways. The novel is quite realistic and would be appropriate for senior high students, especially those who have studied Thoreau and can understand his wish to live "deliberately" at Walden. It might go well in both a nature unit or a thematic unit based on a study of man vs man and man vs himself. An ALA - YASD Best Book of the Year award was given, and it seems well deserved.

Reviewed by Carol Drescher, Coventry High School, Coventry, CT.

Dark But Full of Diamonds by **Katie Letcher Lyle**
Bantam, 1983. 174 pp. $2.50

Dark But Full of Diamonds, written by Katie Letcher Lyle, is one of the latest in the Bantam paperback series of young adolescent novels. This book focuses on the coming-of-age of Scott Dabney, a high school student whose life has been full of anquish since the death of his mother four summers earlier. His mainstay during this interval has been the memory of his swimming teacher from that summer, Hilah Brown, who is now returning to the community as an English and Drama teacher in Scott's high school. Unfortunately, her return increases the already existing tension between Scott and his father, Dr. Dabney, when both coincidentally fall in love with Hilah. Scott is convinced his father should have been able to save his mother and blames him for her death. To now find him a rival in the game of love is more than Scott can bear. He resorts to liquor, reckless behavior, and even an attempted suicide as a means of coping and getting attention. Mrs. Lyle recounts these events effectively in a diary-like format, and her use of literary allusions will thrill the heart of any English teacher. The characters are well drawn and memorable, particularly Scott, who is a very believable and genuinely likable sixteen year old to whom sophomores

and juniors will have no trouble relating. Scott would make an interesting comparison/contrast study with Jeremy Finch, better known as Jem, of To Kill a Mockingbird, a novel that by comparison causes Dark But Full of Diamonds to lose some of its sparkle but not fade completely.

Reviewed by Judy Hinkle, Brien McMahon High School, Norwalk, CT.

Does This School Have Capital Punishment? by **Nat Hentoff**
Dell, 1983. 170 pp. $2.95

"Does this school have capital punishment?" asks Sam Davidson, a transfer student at Burr Academy, a private school in New York. Because he is found with marijuana cigarettes, Sam faces possible expulsion. Because of his irresponsible use of a friend's outdated subway pass, Sam encounters the law. During these troubled times, Sam is encouraged by Major Kelley, an accomplished Black jazz musician who assumes the role of godfather to Sam. Kelley awakens in Sam a feeling for jazz and people. Although Hentoff does not moralize, he makes his point about responsibility. Sam Davidson may be the protagonist, but Major Kelley is the real hero. In general, the novel offers a light, but sensitive protrayal of a teenager's conflicts with his family, school, and life in the real world. Eighth and ninth grade readers who must make decisions on their own will relate to the students and their problems at Burr Academy. Hentoff's novel is similar to William Faulkner's Intruder in the Dust. Faulkner's novel offers a more complicated white boy/black man relationship, but the emergence of a humane, intelligent Black man is present in both novels.

Reviewed by Mary Brooks, H. C. Wilcox Regional Vocational Technical School, Meriden, CT.

The Downtown Fairy Godmother by **Charlotte Pomerantz**
Bantam, 1983. 45 pp. $1.75

Olivia's fairy godmother is unique. She becomes a godmother to get out of the house and meet new people, wears pink curlers because as a Grade C godmother she can't turn hair curly yet, and worries about getting home in time to make her husband's dinner. She can't grant Olivia's wish to own the stuffed cat in the toy store window. Her powers aren't that great. The humanistic qualities of the delightful minor miracles she produces, however, bring realism to this fantasy

that leaves us looking for fairy godmothers in our own lives. This book, despite a somewhat shaky section explaining "uptown" and "downtown" godmothers, flows quickly through the lady's antics to a happy ending. Fourth-graders would not be too sophisticated for this story, either as readers or listeners. Nearly half of the book consists of amusing pen and ink sketches, so the text is easily read aloud in one sitting. As such, it would be a good lead-in for a discussion of selflessness, community service, everyday "magic," or of stereotypes (Certainly no common godmother, this!). Another book in the same vein is The Seven Wishes of Joanna Peabody by Genevieve Gray, although The Downtown Fairy Godmother is somewhat more subtle in the making its point.

Reviewed by Debra Wynn, Noah Wallace School, Farmington, CT.

Far From Home by Ouida Sebestyen
Dell/Laurel Leaf Library, 1983
222 pp. $2.50

In much YA literature, the age of the main character may serve as a guide for the intended audience. The situation differs with this novel. Salty, the main character, is an orphaned eleven year old, whose mother had suggested he seek refuge after her death with Tom Buckley, for whom she had worked. After being grudgingly taken into Buckley's boarding house, Salty works to earn his and his great grandmother's keep, becoming involved in the intricacies of the lives of the adults who live at the boarding house: a pregnant woman fleeing from her gangster husband, a couple breaking apart under the stress of different life-views, and, at the core of the story, Salty's natural father's ambivalence towards this unacknowledged illegitimate son. Salty is characterized as a very perspicacious and independent person saddened by his father's rejection and determined to gain recognition and affection.

The poignant protrayals of people searching for their own niche in life are sensitively drawn, but beyond most middle schoolers' experiences. The description, much of its poetry in the guise of prose, highlights the warm humaneness of the novel. Sophisticated high school readers should appreciate this perceptively drawn story of human relationships.

Reviewed by Christine Sullivan, Plainville High School, Plainville, CT.

Homecoming by **Cynthia Voigt**
Fawcett Juniper, 1982. 318 pp. $2.25

Take four children, a despondent, unemployed mother, an old jalopy parked in a strange city for the basic ingredients. Add as a catalyst the mother abandoning the kids, and you have the inciting force for a gripping novel, indeed. Strangely enough, thirteen-year-old Dicey Tillerman, the spunky heroine of Cynthia Voigt's first YA novel, is not shocked by her mother's bizarre disappearance. Momma always used to chide her, "You always look for the worst." "I like to be ready," would be her reply. Now Dicey must use all her "smarts" to get her charges to their "Utopia" --Bridgeport, CT., where their nearest (and allegedly richest) relative lives. Part One finds them walking miles, dodging the police, sleeping in abandoned shacks and cemetaries, and finally meeting their pious Cousin Eunice. Part Two, much more exciting, deals with their furtive flight from Bridgeport to Crisfield, Maryland (Momma's home) and features their colorful sojourn with a traveling carnival, a terror-filled incident with a would-be white slaver for whom they had picked vegetables, and a climactic encounter with their curmudgeonly Grandmother Abigail, who has never acknowledged them. Especially effective is the verbal and psychological parry-and-thrust between Dicey and her Grandmother, who despite their age gap, are as alike as two snap beans from Abigail's garden. Middle schoolers will respond to Dicey's "grit" and resourcefulness, and all will learn valuable lessons in loyalty and compassion.

Reviewed by Barbara Guerra, Newington High School, Newington, CT.

Hoops by **Walter Dean Myers**
Dell, 1983. 183 pp. $2.50

Hoops is about saving your soul. Set in contemporary Harlem, the main character's preoccupation is his game, basketball. The story is not so much about winning and losing, as about being a winner or a chump. Lonnie has just graduated from high school and has only vague dreams ahead. He has one thing going for him, his game. He is a superb basketball player. Cal, a seeming loser who once played in the NBA, is tapped to coach Lonnie's team in a city-wide tournament. College scouts will be looking for talent, so this is Lonnie's last ticket to a future. Cal can show Lonnie the way. But it was also Cal who was drummed out of the pros in a gambling scandal. Lonnie learns to trust Cal as Cal's reformed personality is revealed. As the team makes the finals, Cal

is pressured to throw the game. The shaping of Lonnie's soul, and the redemption of Cal's, are the true plot of Hoops. The character development is excellent. Cal's past, new pressures, enemies, friends and lovers are beautifully woven, giving great depth to this short book and to Lonnie's soul. Richly characterized, thought provoking, with a bittersweet ending, Hoops is engrossing reading for the junior-senior high athlete. Hoops could be used profitably in a thematic unit with The Contender, Zanballer or Tex.

Reviewed by Kevin Reardon, Farmington High School, Farmington, CT.

I'm On My Way Running: Women Speak on Coming of Age
Lyn Reese, Jean Wilkinson and Phyllis Sheon Koppelman, editors
A Discus Book, Avon Books, 1983. 350 pp. $4.95

This excellent, extensive collection of short narratives, letters, diaries, and poems about women coming of age is likely to be read and savored by thoughtful high school students, especially females. The title is taken from a line in a traditional song of the Papago tribe, which is sung at a young girl's puberty ceremony. The theme is developed through first-person narratives about relationships with mothers and peers, the growing awareness of physical changes, and the personal struggles against the media's images of beauty and society's restrictions on conduct. The reader follows stories about women seeking personal fulfillment and adventure - in China, Chile, Ghana, Indonesia, England, and the United States. Most pieces were written in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but some are from ancient Oriental cultures. There is a richness and variety here that keeps the reader returning again and again.

This book is not suitable for large-group discussion or required class reading. It lends itself to quiet perusal and possibly small-group discussion. The models of narratives, poems, and journals may stimulate the reader to respond to the content by using similar forms for expression. Thus, the book would be useful in an individual writing program also.

Reviewed by Mary L. Thetford, Ed.D., Quinnipiac College, Hamden, CT.

Independence Day by **B. A. Ecker**
Avon Flare, 1983. 203 pp. $2.25

Just as the characters in this novel begin to take on some personality, they become mouthpieces for the author and deliver stilted sermonettes on love, especially homosexual love. The narrator is 16-year old Mike, who decides he is in love with his life-long buddy, Todd. He finally rejects Trish, with whom he has often enjoyed sex and of whom he says, "I love Trish, I really do...When I'm with her, I feel good." He tries a visit to Greenwich Village, where his male date terrifies him with "a long, hard kiss." Despite Mike's ambivalence, the author would have us believe that he is and will remain a confirmed homosexual. He decides he will confess all to Todd on July 4, his "independence day." How will Todd take this confession? To discover this becomes the motivation for reading to the end. Surprisingly, it is not bad motivation. Despite too much didacticism and sentimentality, some interest develops in the characters, who are on the whole good and thoughtful people. The novel possibly could provide bibliotherapy for a high school student interested in the subject. My objection to the book is that it is yet another in a growing number of books that show adults too willing and too quick to label an inexperienced teenager a homosexual.

Reviewed by Richard Zahner, Bunnell High School, Stratford, CT.

The Lake Is On Fire by **Maureen Crane Wartski**
Signet Vista, 1982. 143 pp. $2.25

No surprises are in store for the reader of The Lake Is On Fire: the characters are typical, the plot predictable. As the novel opens, Ricky Telese, a fifteen year old blinded in an accident which also killed his best friend, is dealing unsuccessfully with the recent turn of events. His saviors are to be Sol and Deirdre Gallagher who, typically, have adopted a half wild German shepherd named King. Like Ricky, the dog also has an attitude problem. The four depart for a mountain cabin vacation in hopes that the great outdoors can cure all. Shortly after their arrival, the Gallaghers conveniently retreat into town for supplies. A sudden, severe lightening storm sets the cabin on fire and leaves one blind boy and one unfriendly dog to survive in the wilderness alone. The second half of the novel deals with the bond that develops between boy and dog as they struggle with the burning forest around them. The last

line of the novel, "We made it together," tritely sums up the plot. Only preadolescents or immature students would find appeal in this book, which could be added to a survival or animal unit - if one were desperate for reading material.

Reviewed by Patricia Juliano, Sheehan High School, Wallingford, CT.

Listen Children edited by **Dorothy S. Strickland**
Bantam Skylark Book, 1982. 117 pp. $1.95

Geared for elementary school-aged children in grades four to six, Listen Children is a well-structured, but rather skimpy anthology of Black literature. A brief foreword by Coretta Scott King and a very direct, though too brief, Introduction by the editor, serve as helpful guidelines for the teacher as well as the pupils who read this book on their own. Rather than a text for the classroom, Listen Children would be good leisure reading. It offers stories, poems, a one-act play, and some biographical excerpts that could easily foster knowledge and sensitivity of Black history and culture, especially in the young. Even though Dorothy Strickland states that "This book is for all children.", it is most aptly suited to the young Black child who will find personal pride in reading about African myths (centered around ancient snake rituals), Harriet Tubman--the ex-slave and Underground Conductor for other slaves, Rosa Parks--the heroic Black woman from Alabama who refused to relinquish her bus seat, an act which almost single handedly initiated some Civil Rights legislation in 1956, and other contemporary Black figures. As an anthology the book suffers from a scarcity of content and an innoculous selection of poetry, even though some of the featured poets such as Langston Hughes are quite well known. One of the best pieces is the one-act play about Harriet Tubman and other women displaying individual ideals of heroism. The book also appropriately ends with a biographic selection about the self-taught Stevie Wonder, the blind singer-musician who "listened" his way to music fame. If there were more to this brief anthology, possibly more educators would be prepared to do more "listening."

Reviewed by Norma D. Walrath, Ledyard High School, Ledyard, CT.

Max, the Dog that Refused to Die by Kyra Petrovskaya Wayne
Bantam, 1983, 86 pp. $1.95

Essentially this is a short account of two dog owners who lost their dog in the woods, find it, and pay for its hospital care. What has been left out--details of the dog's recovery, the owner's anguish, and the healed dog's new life--could make this a vivid, gripping story. The story is more narrative than descriptive, more journalistic than reflective. This slight tale (no pun intended) is meant for slow readers. The vocabulary and syntax are at an appropriate level for sixth grade students, but the story suffers from a low-ability syndrome. Nevertheless, at $1.95 the book has a terrific cover, a few illustrations, clear print, and a fast narrative style. The numerous flashbacks may confuse students a bit, and the recreation of Max's ordeal alone in the wilderness may cause skeptical students to wonder how Max recounted his ordeal to the author, but this is a story that could hold the interest of many students. It might be taught as part of an animal unit with Big Red, Incredible Journey and Snow Dog.

Reviewed by John Barnes, Turn of River School, Stamford, CT.

The Money Creek Mare by Patricia Calvert
Signet Vista, 1983. 133 pp. $2.25

Despite the title, this is not a typical horse story; rather it is a young girl's discovery of her identity, worth and direction. Ella Rae Carmody was the reason her teenage parents married. The fifteen-year-old Ella Rae treats her parents as peers to the point of calling them by their first names, which is initially jarring. The mother, Rosanne, decides she no longer can remain "trapped" by an early mistake and hops into a truck bound for California, blithely leaving her husband, Ella Rae and two younger children. Ella Rae struggles to replace Rosanne and to keep her remaining family together. This book's frankness (Rosanne shows Ella Rae the "quilt of purple flowers" on which she was conceived) makes it appropriate only for senior high students. Regardless of its flaws, it is endearing. The world is seen through Ella Rae's eyes; her candid commentary on people and places is reminiscent of Huck Finn. Though Calvert is no Mark Twain, it would be interesting to juxtapose the two novels.

Reviewed by Eileen Ferro, Brien McMahon High School, Norwalk, CT.

Nobody's Brother by **Anne Snyder and Louis Pelletier**
Signet Vista, 1982. 153 pp. $2.25

Josh, the teenage main character of this adolescent novel, has problems. His mother is going through her second divorce, he is losing his best friend and stepbrother, Howie, and he suffers from a serious and sometimes socially debilitating speech impediment. Josh is portrayed as a sensitive and lonely young man who cannot accept or deal with things that are happening to him. The novel is structured in a series of quick paced and interconnected episodes in Josh's life, spanning the time of the separation and divorce of his mother and stepfather. All of his feelings of frustration and alienation are compounded by his stuttering. Consequently, he has difficulties expressing himself but has successfully hidden his handicap until he is diagnosed by his high school's speech therapist. Up to this point in the novel, the only person Josh feels totally comfortable with is Howie. The final crushing blow comes when Howie moves away with his father, Josh's stepfather. In his frantic efforts to be reuinited with Howie, Josh encounters numerous traumatic situations. The book is written in a flowing style, and there are no stylistic flaws or breaks to indicate co-authorship. Most teachers should feel comfortable recommending this book to their students; however, it is more appropriate for the more mature junior high and high school reader. It has well drawn and interesting characters that young adult readers can readily empathize with. Nobody's Brother could be taught in conjunction with other pieces of literature in which the main character meets and surmounts significant personal problems.

Reviewed by Richard H. Gray, Enfield High School, Enfield, CT.

No Scarlet Ribbons by **Susan Terris**
Avon/Flare, 1983. pp. 154 $2.25

Rachel Nolan wants to have one big, happy family. When her mother marries Norman Ross, Rachel's 8th grade English teacher, Rachel, thinks that her life will return to one similar to the memories of happier times before her real father died. However, there is one big problem: conservative, level-headed, taciturn Norman isn't spontaneous and capricious like Rachel's father. He and his son Sandy scoff at Rachel's impromptu and often [illegible] plans. As a result, to bring her newly formed family together again, Rachel must struggle with her own identity and the real meaning of her father's dying words, "You need to make things happen." Although young

teenagers may identify with Rachel's feeling of being left out when her mom and dad seem to be "lost in each other", the character of Rachel will be hard to grasp and believe. The plot, based on Rachel's inner workings of her mind as she learns to manipulate the lives of others less and accept people as they are, tends to drag and not build to a climactic ending. The theme of self-identity, superficially treated in this book, could be enriched through classroom reading and discussion of Emily Dickinson's poem, "I'm Nobody, Who Are You?". Though Terris' "No Scarlet Ribbons is acclaimed by School Library Journal as a "moving contemporary tale", there are other, more exciting and believable novels which treat adolescent search for identity in a more interesting way.

Reviewed by Barbara Laurain, Timothy Edwards Middle School, South Windsor, CT.

Save Queen of Sheba by **Louise Moeri**
Avon, 1982, 107 pp. $1.95

Twelve-year-old King David and his little sister, Queen of Sheba, are the only survivors of a Sioux Indian attack on their wagon train. The two children don't know if their parents have been killed in the attack or are safely ahead on the Oregon Trail. The search for their parents takes the children through infection, storms, hunger, animal attack, exposure, and even an additional confrontation with Indians. Time after time, King David must use limited resources to survive the ordeal at hand. He must constantly rely on the memory of his father's courage and positive attitude in life to muster his spirits. This exciting story of survival on the American frontier should be of interest to most elementary and middle school students. New adventures and novel solutions meet the reader every few pages. Unlike in some stories, the solutions do not always come easily and are not always correct. In fact, at one point in the story, King David is even tempted to leave his sister behind in order to secure his own survival. This story makes excellent recommended reading for students who are studying pioneer life in social studies.

Reviewed by Darla Shaw, Reading Coordinator, Ridgefield, CT.

The Snowbird by **Patricia Calvert**
Signet Vista, 1982 135 pp. $1.75

The Snowbird is a first novel for Patricia Calvert, and in some of its 135 pages it shows. However, for the most part, this is a nicely told tale of a young girl's struggle to find love, security, and herself in the Dakota Territory of 1883. Thirteen year old Willanna (Willie) Bannerman and her six year old brother Thomas Jefferson (TJ) are forced to move in with their uncle and his eccentric wife Belle after the death of their parents in a fire. Snowbird is the name of a silver filly born the day Willie and TJ arrived in the Dakota Territory from Tennessee. Throughout the two year span of this novel, comparisons are made between the growing up of both Willie and Snowbird. This is not an action novel. Some young adult boys will be bored after reading the first few pages, but it should be well received by 11-14 year old girls and by boys in that age bracket who are avid readers. Ms. Calvert overdoes the similes, putting at least two on each page, and she never satisfactorily shows why Snowbird is important enough to become the title of the novel. She also uses a conclusion which is right out of S. E. Hinton's The Outsiders. Despite the flaws, however, there is a great deal about this book that is good. The author's historical background is evident in the detailed description of the setting and the dialect of the characters. She paints what appears to be a realistic picture of life in the Dakota Territory near the turn of the century. Although not nearly as refined as yet, Ms. Calvert's style is reminiscent of Robert Newton Peck, of A Day No Pigs Would Die fame.

Reviewed by Philip M. Connors, Kennedy Jr. High School, Enfield, CT.

Wait Until Tomorrow by **Barriet May Savitz**
Signet, 1981. 149 pp. $1.95

Shawn Blake has his share of problems for a high school boy--the divorce of his parents and then the death of his mother, a father who really does not want him, a grandfather who cannot talk because of a laryngectomy, a girl friend who is anti-nukes, and a failed attempt at suicide. But Shawn has been loved and finds new love and understanding.

After his unsuccessful attempt at suicide, his doctor tells him, "If things get bad, wait until tomorrow. They might get better." So Shawn waits but finds that tomorrow becomes today and may be better or worse than yesterday. He feels he must solve his problems by himself and, only when he realizes that other people also have problems and that we all need each other's help, is he able to see that tomorrow can be better and is definitely worth the wait. This novel includes many poignant subjects but treats them in a "happily ever after" manner. The reader never really feels that Shawn's problems are as tragic as he feels they are. Thus, this book can be read by middle and junior high students who are not quite ready for the really serious side of life but want to read about it. The love theme is handled in an almost platonic manner. Wait Until Tomorrow is a "nice" story with a good theme.

Reviewed by Janet T. Murphy, Northwest Catholic High School, West Hartford, CT.

Where Has Deedie Wooster Been All These Years? by **Anita Jacobs**
Dell, 1983. 230 pp. $2.25

What do you do when all of a sudden your brother dies, and you become an only child? If you're Deedie Wooster, you become a "Two-In-One" and think of life in terms of "when and if I grow up." If you're lucky, you also have empathetic Mr. Zachary for ninth-grade English. Under his direction, fourteen-year-old Deedie--a lost, under-achiever--depicts detailed episodes from her past and comments about her compulsions. She discovers she is not lost, only hiding. Recounting the story from Deedie's point of view and using the syntax of today's adolescent, Jacobs has joined the growing list of authors who deal with the tragic theme of the death of a sibling and the alienation of the surviving child. Although the novel does not contain the sophistication of plot or style found in Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye or Guest's Ordinary People, it does reveal a convincing character who copes with this situation. It is Deedie's desire to care and be cared about that gives the novel its appeal. It is Deedie's character, brave, sagacious, unpredicatable and humorous, that will capture the interest of the middle school student. And it is Deedie's perceptive portrayal of teachers that will compel them to pause. I know I did.

Reviewed by Ann Keating, Bristol Central High School, Bristol, CT

RESOURCES

The following materials should be part of every school's reference library.

Burress, Lee and Edward B. Jenkinson. The Students' Right To Know. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1982.

Censorship Litigation and the Schools: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held January, 1981. Chicago: American Library Association. 1983.

Davis, James E. Dealing with Censorship. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1979.

Hefley, James C. Textbooks on Trial. Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, Inc., 1977.

Hentoff, Nat. The First Freedom. New York: Delacorte Press, 1980.

Jenkinson, Edward B. Censors in the Classroom. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979.

LaHaye, Tim. The Battle for the Mind. Old Tappen, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co. 1980.

Levine, Alan and Eve Cary. The Rights of Students: The Basic ACLU Guide to a Student's Rights. New York: Avon Books, 1973.

Parker, Barbara and Stefanie Weiss. Protecting the Freedom to Learn: A Citizen's Guide. Washington, DC: People for the American Way. 1983.

Rubin, David. The Rights of Teachers: The Basic ACLU Guide to a Teacher's Constitutional Rights. New York: Avon Books, 1972.

The Students' Right To Read. Urbana, IL: NCTE. 1982.

Sussman, Alan and Martin Guggenheim. The Rights of Parents: The Basic ACLU Guide to the Rights of Parents. New York: Avon Books, 1980.

PERIODICALS

Freedom To Read Foundation News. Freedom To Read Foundation, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611

Intellectual Freedom Newsletter. American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611

CONNECTICUT ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE AGAINST CENSORSHIP 1983

Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.
Linda Voghel
331 Wethersfield Avenue
Hartford, CT 06114 (522-8201)

Connecticut Civil Liberties Union
William Olds, Executive Director
22 Maple Avenue
Hartford, CT 06114 (247-9823)

Connecticut Coalition for Academic Freedom
Mary Anna Tien, Chair
State Library Service Center
786 South Main Street
Middletown, CT 06457 (344-2972)

Connecticut Council for Social Studies
W. Scott Brown
Lyme-Old Lyme High School
Old Lyme, CT 06371 (434-1652)

Connecticut Council of Teachers of English

Diane P. Shugert
English Dept.
Central Conn. State University
New Britain, CT 06050 (827-7431)
(267-0663)

Christine Sullivan
Plainville High School
Robert Holcomb Way
Plainville, CT 06062 (747-6670)

Connecticut Education Association
Maggie MacAlpine
21 Oak Street
Hartford, CT 06106 (525-5641)

Connecticut Educational Media Association
Dr. Brenda White, Intellectual Freedom Chair
Connecticut State Department of Education
P.O. Box 2219, Room 355
Hartford, CT 06145 (566-4572)

Connecticut Library Association
Intellectual Freedom Committee
Betty Rosenbaum, Chair
Watertown Library Association
470 Main Street
Watertown, CT 06795 (274-6729)

Connecticut State Federation of Teachers
1781 Wilbur Cross Highway
Berlin, CT 06037 (828-1400)

(prepared by David Brochu, Regional School #7, Winsted, CT 06098)

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE AGAINST SCHOOL CENSORSHIP

American Civil Liberties Union
22 East 40th Street
New York, NY 10016
212-925-1222

American Library Association
Office for Intellectual Freedom
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611
312-944-6780

Association of American Publishers
1 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10016
212-689-8920

National Coalition Against Censorship
132 West 43 Street
New York, NY 10036
212-944-9899

National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, IL 61801
217-328-3870

National Education Association
1201 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
202-833-4000

People for the American Way
1424 16th Street, N.W.
Suite 601
Washington, DC 20036
202-462-4777

Prepared by
Diane P. Shugert

Further information about these and other organizations is available in Dealing with Censorship, James E. Davis, ed., NCTE, 1979.

Rationale for teaching Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones

Living in a fast-moving world with technological changes occurring daily, today's youth seek immediate gratification. The future is distant and uncertain, and they snatch the moment and live dangerously, never counting the cost.

Ann Head depicts their attitudes and values in her novel, Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones. She neither preaches nor condemns their life style as she realistically describes July Grober and Bo Jo Jones' early marriage. From the very beginning the Grobers did not approve of July's going steady with Bo Jo. It was a matter of living in different social circles with distinctive habits and tastes; therefore, when July becomes pregnant, she does not confide in her parents but tells Bo Jo and they marry secretly. Both families disapprove of the marriage when it is announced. The Grobers decide a church wedding is necessary to save face, but the Joneses think only of the scholarship at the university lost to Bo Jo.

There is no returning to Trilby High School for either July or Bo Jo to complete their studies, so Bo Jo works in Grober's bank and July becomes a disgruntled housewife living in the unattractive home of the Joneses. When a more suitable garage apartment is found, they move into it but greater financial worries arise and cause many arguments when going to a movie or to the Coffee Pot for hamburgers and cokes are extravagances. Each penny must be counted. Visitors to the apartment find it restricting. All has changed. They lose contact with their classmates. July is bored but meeting Lee at the supermarket is a diversion. However, Bo Jo finds this friendship undesirable. Another reason for arguments.

When July's baby arrives, he lives for a very short time. Now the parents feel that each must return to his home and the marriage will dissolve. So much has happened to the newlyweds that they decide to continue their lives as responsible adults. The baby, although dead, is a bond. July enters business school and Bo Jo finishes his high school courses and enters the university. She become a secretary and helps finance his education. Even her return to Mary Ann's wedding within her social circle does not change her feeling that she had made the right decision, a mature decision not to look backward but forward to better things.

To those parents and adults who frown upon realism in fiction, I pose the question, isn't out-of-wedlock pregnancy a critical situation in our junior and senior high school today? Ann Head in her novel faces this problem and resolves it in a mature fashion. She does not condone the behavior but openly presents the consequences: moral, social, emotional, and psychological. Herein lie the criteria for judgment. Moreover, the language is neither obscene nor vulgar, therefore not objectionable. She handles Lee's pregnancy and abortion in the same mature fashion delving into consequences rather than presenting ways out of difficult situations.

We live in an open society. Youth's problems are many. Television, films, and magazines on newsstands also present out-of-wedlock pregnancy to viewers, old and young, sometimes boldly. Few restrictions are made. Recently, newscasters announced that abortion is an issue in the presidential campaign of 1976. Preadolescents and adolescents realize the implications. Biology classes in junior and senior high school include physical development (menstruation, emission, pregnancy) in a unit of work; and sex education, a unit in most school curricula, presents the facts of life.

Grandmother Grober accepted July and Bo Jo as human beings with strengths and weaknesses. They had erred, overcome social, emotional, and economic problems, and matured and grown in self-respect and knowledge of self.

Questions to raise when teaching this novel is what is crucial. They should center around the needs and rebellion of youth, parental guidance and direction, and desirable and acceptable values in society to develop increased understanding between youth and parents. Rebellion need not develop into a revolution if family discussions focus on long-range goals, dreams, expectations, and aspirations. The character of Lee and July may be contrasted. Individual differences in personality, attitude, and values can be discussed. Which are more desirable, acceptable, and healthy? In such an open-ended discussion, the students should fulfill their desire to know and grow and develop into contributing members of our society.

Josephine L. Cocco
NEATE Committee on the Profession

Rationale for teaching Soul on Ice

Soul on Ice is a self-portrait of Eldridge Cleaver, a black man searching for self-worth in a white society which he feels has condemned his people to menial tasks and "Body" masculinity in boxing and has elevated the white man to "Omnipotent Administrator" and "Brain" power. This is his obsessive concern as he writes his journal in Folsom prison, California, where he spent nine years on a marijuana charge (caught with a shopping bag full of marijuana) and for rape since he wanted revenge against the white race and the white women in particular. He rants and raves about the situation of the black woman as an Amazon rather than an attractive, feminine human being and finds himself in a padded cell. His language as he describes their plight, called down-to-earth by some critics, is unpalatable and inappropriate for most junior high school students, but the language truly expresses Cleaver's rage and his circumstances and should be examined as such expression by older students.

It is Lovejoff, the prison teacher, who inspires him to read and read he does voraciously the books of great men, black and white, so that he might find himself. He has faith in no one and tries to find a hero, really an activist, among them. He admires Malcolm X, Ralph Ellison, and Paul Robeson who articulated the aspirations of the black man; but he rages about the white statesmen, those architects of a mighty nation whom children have been taught to revere yet articulated the separate-but-equal principle. He also writes to "save" himself from this obsession. Writing to Beverly Axelrod, his lawyer, he finds some solace for himself. Here his language is eloquent rather than offensive.

In this journal, he does acknowledge that modern white youth are sensitive to those conditions under which the black man lives and will not repeat the mistakes of their forefathers. The freedom found in the music (jazz) and the dance (the twist) has released them to think consciously of the black man and his contribution to mankind. It is this rhythmic communication which is a step toward the solution of the problem.

Nevertheless, there are other situations that plague him: police brutality, the high percentage of black men fighting in Vietnam, and the image of the black man or woman entertainer submissive to white supremacy. He cheers his people as they seek revenge in riots in Harlem and Watts.

Finally, an imprisoned black man, Infidel, helps him to see the situation clearly. He says that there has already been too much blood shed, and the nation can not stand another blood bath. Therefore, he ends his book on a plea to the black man to accept the challenge and direct his talents to the struggle for a more positive image for his people, especially for the black woman. It is a plea to change her image from a menial to that of a human being, beautiful and desirable, and they can build a "New City Together".

The teacher choosing this autobiography for a class should be aware of the fact that this account was written in an age of rebellion, marches, riots, sit-ins, teach-ins. It is only one man's viewpoint, and it should be presented as such and contrasted with the viewpoints of James Baldwin, Martin Luther King, and other black men who have struggled for a positive self-image for themselves and their people.

Josephine Cocco
NEATE Committee on the Profession

BEST COPY

Rationale for teaching Manchild in the Promised Land

Claude Brown's poignant story is one of survival in the streets of Harlem, an unpretty life but real, hectic, and challenging to him in his search of self. He has no interest in school and finds no relevancy in his basal reader except for seeing a dog like Spot in later years (302). His childhood combines playing hookey from school as early as the first grade, street fights to demonstrate physical prowess, cutting or staying out all night, stealing and entering Children's Court for his offenses. During his teens, his delinquent behavior becomes a serious problem: He leaves school, joins a vicious gang, begins to smoke reefers, drinks wine and liquor, breaks into an A and P store, enters Bellevue Hospital for observation, then Youth House, and finally Wiltwyck, a reformatory (171). Reformatory work programs and counseling do not resolve his problems. The boys at Wiltwyck form gangs, fight, and steal drugs from the infirmary to satisfy their desires of the moment. He is a "hell raiser".

When he meets Papanek, the new director of the reformatory, he finds someone who cares, someone who cares, someone who sees people as people, the first person that he wants to do anything for. (125) He visits him often and enjoys the interaction with this understanding person who had suffered under Nazi rule and practices a more humane way of dealing with teenagers. Moreover, Papanek recognizes his potential and encourages him to return to school. What a contrast to his home environment, a crowded tenement with a father who beats him into becoming a "good boy" and a mother who prays constantly that he will become "good" yet repeatedly tells him that he must have the devil in him (287).

His restless spirit continues to get him into trouble after leaving Wiltwyck, and he spends a few years at Warwick, another reform school, where the "real hip young" men are sent and "all come out better criminals". Compared to one hundred boys at Wiltwyck are Warwick's five hundred "cats" from New York City and the suburbs. He learns much about picking locks, cutting drugs, and making a bag of heroin (144, 146). Getting shot makes him a hero, and the gang marvels at his exploits. He establishes himself as their superior. Only Mrs. Cohen-to whom he can relate and who arouses his interest in reading biographies of men like Sugar Ray Robinson, Jackie Robinson, Albert Einstein and Albert Schweitzer-makes a lasting impression upon him. She suggests going to college as a possibility. He returns twice more to Warwick for stealing silver and furs. Hearing jazz played by one of the inmates catches his fancy for he perceives jazz as a form of self-expression. In jazz he finds another interest in life. However, a friend, Reno, introduces him to cocaine as a means of earning money and becoming free, and this experience proves almost disastrous.

Leaving tenement-life and moving to Hamilton Terrace despite his mother's pleadings gives him freedom. He enters Washington Irving High School. He finds it difficult, nevertheless, he is determined to complete the evening school requirements.

The year, 1955, is significant in the history of Harlem. Black Muslims were reaching everyone, and Muhammad was trying to show the lost Black people their way to a better life. He gave them a cause to fight for, a way to remove the stigma from their self-image. It was a time to get together. Even in prisons in New York, the Black Muslim movement was a powerful influence to find oneself and become a worthy, dignified individual. It was closer to Harlemites than any other organizations. The Black Muslim movement had saved Brown's friends, Bulldog, Alley Rush, and Floyd Sake from self-destruction.

Music continues to be an outlet for him. He learns to play the piano. During one of his practice sessions at Washington Irving High School a white girl praises his technique. A friendship develops but lasts only a few months since her parents disapprove. His anger flares, but completion of his high school education and passing the entrance examinations to Columbia University assuage his anger. Now he only needs money to continue his education. Selling cosmetics and encouragement from Rev. James, a Black Muslim, help him to reach his goal. This strong Black man had helped others, including Brown's brother.

Reading this autobiography, Man Child in the Promised Land, can be a shocking experience for an immature reader. The language is obscene and pornography and commercial sex abound. But the mature reader can look beyond these offensive and violent experiences to the man who -- though lost, deprived of basic needs, lacking in security -- developed inner strength and courage. Claude Brown struggled desperately to reach self-actualization and develop a positive outlook on life.

Claude Brown's book may be compared and contrasted with Eldridge Cleaver's Soul On Ice (1965). Brown changes as Cleaver does. Manchild also lends itself to the study of attitudes toward pornography as discussed by Gay Talese and Ernest van den Haag in an article by Walter Goodman (The New York Times, Sunday, November 21, 1976, Section 2, pp. 1, and 26). Van den Haag states, "I would call pornographic whatever is blatantly offensive to the standards of the community", but Talese says, "The Supreme Court has never been able to define what is obscene to the satisfaction of most Americans. If you are going to give government the power to tell us what is obscene and to restrict our freedom to read books, see films, or look at pictures, if you give government that kind of power over the individual, you are not going to maintain a democracy."

Dr. Josephine L. Cocco
NCATE Committee on the Profession

1 Man Child in the Promised Land, Claude Brown, A Signet Book, New American Library, Inc., 1965.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801

STATEMENT OF CENSORSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES

I. Statement

Teachers of English language arts must make daily decisions about materials and methods of instruction, choosing from increasingly broad and varied alternatives in order to serve students who are themselves increasingly diverse, both linguistically and culturally. Guidelines help teachers of English language arts to make those decisions. NCTE advocates and supports guidelines that help teachers avoid censorship. NCTE opposes censorship wherever it appears.

II. Distinctions between Censorship and Professional Guidelines

Censorship and guidelines sometimes appear similar because both involve selection from myriad alternatives. However, censorship and professional guidelines may be distinguished one from the other. Whereas the goal of censorship is to remove, eliminate or bar particular materials and methods, the goal of professional guidelines is to provide criteria for selection of materials and methods.

III. Censorship Distinguished from Professional Guidelines: Examples

Examples of Censorship	Examples of Professional Guidelines
1. **Exclude Specific Materials or Methods** *Example:* Eliminate books with unhappy endings.	1. **Include Specific Materials or Methods** *Example:* Include some books with unhappy endings to give a varied view of life.
2. **Are Essentially Negative** *Example:* Review your classroom library and eliminate books that include stereotypes.	2. **Are Essentially Affirmative** *Example:* Review your classroom library. If necessary, add books that portray groups in nonstereotypical ways.
3. **Intend to Control** *Example:* Do not accept *policeman.* Insist that students say and write *police officer.*	3. **Intend to Advise** *Example:* Encourage such nonlimiting alternatives for *policeman* as *police officer, officer of the law* or *law enforcer.*
4. **Seek to Indoctrinate, to Limit Access to Ideas and Information** *Example:* Drug abuse is a menace to students. Eliminate all books that portray drug abuse.	4. **Seek to Educate, to Increase Access to Ideas and Information** *Example:* Include at appropriate grade levels books that will help students understand the personal and social consequences of drug abuse.
5. **Look at Parts of a Work in Isolation** *Example:* Remove this book. The language includes profanity.	5. **See the Relationship of Parts to Each Other and to a Work as a Whole** *Example:* Determine whether the profanity is integral to portrayal of character and development of theme in the book.

IV. **Practical Suggestions for Writing Professional Guidelines**

Although the primary concern here is the distinction between censorial and advisory statements, other matters must be considered in the actual writing of guidelines. Writers need to:

1. *Respect the role of the English language arts teacher as a professional with broad knowledge of language, literature and cultural traditions.*

2. *Identify clearly the events and concerns that led to development of the particular set of guidelines.*

   This information might help the English language arts teacher in one school setting (rural, independent, suburban or urban) to understand the usefulness of guidelines developed elsewhere.

3. *Specify the professional objectives the guidelines are expected to reach.*

   Guidelines are less likely to have censorial effects if their content is closely linked to the purposes of English language arts instruction, to the function and philosophy of the school, to the particular student population, and to the aims of the curriculum as a whole.

4. *Write in plain English, providing clear, current definitions of professional terms as needed.*

5. *Respect the concerns and convictions of both external critics and professional colleagues who have opposing ideas about either principles or practices.*

   Guidelines are abstractions, and honest differences of opinion will exist about translating abstractions into concrete teaching and selection of materials.

6. *Build in procedures for review and revision.*

   Guidelines should make clear the date of adoption and the sponsoring group(s) and should provide for periodic review and revision. The teaching community is committed to continued research and study and to the dissemination of insights that prove to be valid and useful.

—Approved by the NCTE Board of Directors, 1982.

FREE TO LEARN

A Policy on Academic Freedom and Public Education

Connecticut Board of Education, September 9, 1981

Academic freedom is the freedom to teach and to learn. In defending the freedom to teach and to learn, we affirm the democratic process itself. American public education is the source of much that is essential to our democratic heritage. No other single institution has so significantly sustained our national diversity, nor helped voice our shared hopes for an open and tolerant society. Academic freedom is among the strengths of American public education. Attempts to deny the freedom to teach and to learn are, therefore, incompatible with the goals of excellence and equity in the life of our public schools.

With freedom comes responsibility. With rights come obligations. Accordingly, academic freedom in our public schools is subject to certain limitations. Therefore, the STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION affirms that:

Academic freedom in our public schools is properly defined within the context of law and the constraints of mutual respect among individuals. Public schools represent a public trust. They exist to prepare our children to become partners in a society of self-governing citizens. Therefore, access to ideas and opportunities to consider the broad range of questions and experiences which constitute the proper preparation for a life of responsible citizenship must not be defined by the interests of any single viewpoint. Teachers, school administrators, librarians, and school media specialists must be free to select instructional and research materials appropriate to the maturity level of their students. This freedom is itself subject to the reasonable restrictions mandated by law to school officials and administrators. At the same time, local school officials must demonstrate substantial or legitimate public interest in order to justify censorship or other proposed restrictions upon teaching and learning. Similarly, local boards of education cannot establish criteria for the selection of library books based solely on the personal, social or political beliefs of school board members. While students must be free to voice their opinions in the context of a free inquiry after truth and respect for their fellow students and school personnel, student expression which threatens to interfere substantially with the school's function is not warranted by academic freedom. Students must be mindful that their rights are neither absolute nor unlimited. Part of responsible citizenship is coming to accept the consequences of the freedoms to which one is entitled by law and tradition. Similarly, parents have the right to affect their own children's education, but this right must be balanced against the right other parent's children have to a suitable range of educational experiences. Throughout, the tenets of academic freedom seek to encourage a spirit of reasoned community participation in the life and practices of our public schools.

Since teaching and learning are among the missions of our public schools, the STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION affirms the distinction between teaching and indoctrination. Schools should teach students how to think, not what to think. To study an idea is not necessarily to endorse an idea.

Public school classrooms are forums for inquiry, not arenas for the promulgation of particular viewpoints. While communities have the right to exercise supervision over their own public school practices and programs, their participation in the educational life of their schools should respect the constitutional and intellectual rights guaranteed school personnel and students by American law and tradition.

Accordingly, the STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, in order to encourage improved educational practices, recommends that local school boards adopt policies and procedures to receive, review, and take action upon requests that question public school practices and programs. Community members should be encouraged, and made aware of their rights to voice their opinions about school practices and programs in an appropriate administrative forum. The STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION further recommends that local school boards take steps to encourage informed community participation in the shared work of sustaining and improving our public schools.

Finally, the STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION affirms that community members and school personnel should acknowledge together that the purpose of public education is the pursuit of knowledge and the preparation of our children for responsible citizenship in a society that respects differences and shared freedom.

The following rationales for Free to Learn were presented as speeches during the CT Board of Education's public hearing on the policy:

CCTE Position on Academic Freedom

The Connecticut Council of Teachers of English supports the Proposed Policy on Academic Freedom and Public Education, and it is proud of the State Board of Education's leadership in confronting what is perhaps the most crucial issue facing public education in this decade. It is no surprise that we should witness opposition to academic freedom, which is at the very foundation of our public school system and democracy, and which creates the proper climate in which students and teachers are free to study ideas. Such a policy, you see, insures attention to a multiplicity of voices, a diversity of cultures, the homogeneity of the population. Some of this era's dominant voices, however, wish to restrict students and teachers to their own points of view.

The real threat to opponents of academic freedom, I fear, is not our pluralistic society with its diversity of ideas and beliefs--the real threat is themselves. When school boards make policies based on the vested interests of a few vocal citizens who would seek to deny, restrict, purge or limit, rather than on beliefs representative of a larger segment of

their community, they deny the rights of all citizens, let alone students and teachers. To the opponents of academic freedom who gain strength in the present day convergence of groups appearing to agree on issues of religion, politics, family and censorship, I say the freedom at stake is your own as well as the student's and teacher's. When your majority and its dominant voices no longer prevail, when you yourselves are subject to the wills of stronger voices, when you no longer predominate in deciding when something is un-patriotic, anti-family, depressing or negative, when others select for teaching a fixed set of values and an approved point of view, the freedom at stake will be your own. When others wrest from your children the right to hear and discuss alternative views so that as adults they will be informed citizens able to think and make rational choices, the freedom lost will be your children's. These are the things to fear, not a policy on academic freedom.

On behalf of the English teachers of Connecticut, I ask the Board to pass this proposed policy to insure that all voices continue to be heard in our process of academic inquiry. Students in today's senior class will be approximately thirty-seven years old when they enter the twenty-first century. Today's kindergartners will be only 25. Consider how important a policy on academic freedom is to a student who will live most of his or her life in the Twenty-first Century.

Paul Cervoni
CCTE President

Free to Learn

I speak today in support of FREE TO LEARN, the CT state Board of Education's proposed policy on academic freedom. And, even though I see from the speakers list that some people here today oppose the Board's adopting this policy, I find it hard to understand what parts of so balanced and reasonable a statement could possibly be offensive to anyone. The policy recommends that schools encourage citizens to participate in the life of the schools. That seems sensible. The policy also recommends that schools adopt procedures for reviewing requests which question materials which are used in schools. That seems sensible. The policy repeats that schools are bound by law and that materials should be selected which are appropriate for the maturity of the students. Is not that sensible? After all, a great part of any teacher's preparation to teach consists of learning as much as possible about what materials are available in the teacher's discipline; which of those materials are best handled by students of differing abilities, maturity, and beliefs; and how to present the materials so that students learn the discipline being taught. Schools, teachers, and students have always been constrained by law just as all citizens are. Furthermore, school boards are constrained by law, as well,--and the courts have consistently held that school boards must demonstrate SUBSTANTIAL AND LEGITIMATE public interest before they place constraints on teaching and learning.

I suspect that some people object to the very mission of the public schools, however. They think it is wrong for other people's children to learn about their world or about literature or about science. Why do they think that? Because they do not want their own children to learn about these things. They have decided that they know what one point of view is right. They have decided that books which do not agree with their views should be kept away from all children. Their point of view is so limited that it cannot withstand any differences. It cannot even withstand knowledge that disagreement exists. Perhaps I sound too harsh. If I do so, it is because I have spent more than ten years studying attacks made on books and materials in CT and in the schools of the country as a whole. No matter how those who oppose this very balanced proposed policy cover their aim with generalities, their actual "requests" concerning school materials reveal their true purposes. What books have been attacked here in CT? What teaching methods have been attacked? Just what are the materials and knowledge that--to some of the opponents of this policy--constitute that all-pervasive religion of secular humanism? (A religion, by the way, which they say we all somehow practice even though we call ourselves Jews or Episcopaleans or Buddists or Athiests or Catholics.) What <u>are</u> these un-American, communistic materials? In East Hartford an autobiography of a poor, black welfare mother. In Ledyard, a distinguished, prizewinning science series which told of Eskimos' beliefs and traditions. In Enfield, a text which showed that some Americans are black and some are poor. In Burlington, (some years ago) TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, a book which champions the rights of citizens--particularly black citizens--to a fair trial.

At various places in the state, CATCHER IN THE RYE, a modern classic in which a teen aged boy is shown to be so concerned to be moral and good that society's imperfections almost drive him mad. Even the <u>teachers</u> are not to be allowed access to dangerous ideas. Some of the opponents of this policy have tried in Torrington and Manchester and Stratford and Portland to keep the teachers from attending workshops whose titles offend the censors. Can any reasonable person truly believe that society is put at risk through these books and materials and workshops? Or that they represent some monolithic secret religion?

Academic freedom does <u>not</u> mean that any teacher is free to indoctrinate students with the teacher's religion. It means rather that <u>students</u> ought to be free to learn the resources that society has to offer. In English, which is my special field, it means that students can learn the myths and legends that so much of our literature alludes to. It means that students can learn that Eskimos and Cherokee have religions and legends which inform their writing. How is a student to learn literature if he or she is not allowed to read it? Novels, short stories, and poems especially are even more varied in their views than are their authors, for every work and every character in a work is unique. Students have a right to learn what is <u>there</u>, what has been written, what has been thought. And each student, finally, has a right to accept or reject each thing that the student reads.

Yes, parents have the obligation to shape their own children, but they do not have the right to control all children. And society as a whole has a right to expect that students in science class will learn science. That students in English class will learn what literature is about and how to read literature. That students in history class will learn history. If certainty exists in a discipline, certainty will be present in the classroom. If controversy exists in the discipline, controversy ought to exist in the classroom. Teachers cannot present certainties when their disciplines are not certain.

Schools exist so that students will learn. Schools are necessarily biased in favor of knowing things; of learning things. The policy before you today acknowledges that schools exist so that students may learn. I urge you to adopt it.

Diane P. Shugert
CEJ Editor

About the second fear, I would say that readers, by and large, and I consider myself to be a perfect example, are not doers. We read--or write--because the real world slightly frightens us. Vicariously, through reading, we can have thousands of exciting adventures that in reality we would shrink from, would those possibilities ever present themselves. Kids that are out doing things are not, on the other hand, doing them because they read about them in a book.

Norma Klein, "Some Thoughts..."

"In this district whenever a parent raises his eyebrow the administration jumps. Teachers have to fight on their own."

-High School Teacher-Rural

Ohio teachers' comments. Quoted in J. Christopher Davis & James E. Davis, "Censorship in Ohio Schools...," Athens, OH, 1981.

COMPLETION FORM FOR RATIONALE

School: Date:
Teacher:

Title:
Grade or Course:

Approximate date book will be used:

This will will be used by the whole class Yes No

This book will be recommended to individual students Yes No

This book will be used as part of a larger study of

Ways in which the book is especially appropriate for students in this class:

Ways in which the book is especially pertinent to the objectives of this course or unit:

Special problems that might arise in relation to the book and some planned activities which handle these problems:

Some other appropriate books an individual student might read in place of this book:

Prepared by Diane P. Shugert for NEATE "Rationales for Often Challenged Books" (1972). Reprinted in James E. Davis, ed., Dealing with Censorship, Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1979